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P. H. Bartle
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JOSEPH REDDEFORD WALKER

at the age of sixty years

Douglas Sloane Watson

WEST WIND

The Life Story of

JOSEPH REDDEFORD WALKER

Knight of the Golden Horseshoe

PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR HIS FRIENDS BY

PERCY H. BOOTH

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

1934

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PREFACE

AT A MEETING *of the Los Angeles Electric Club some ten years ago there was a speaker on the program whose subject was the history of Southern California. In the course of his remarks he referred to Joseph Reddeford Walker as one of the early frontiersmen who made his way from the Rocky Mountain area to Southern California.*

My business interests later often took me to Owens Valley and on my way both going and returning I passed and repassed the highway leading to Walker's Pass. I began to wonder what manner of man this mountaineer and trapper could have been who gave his name to a mountain pass, a river, and a lake, and after vainly searching for books to satisfy my curiosity, I resolved that some day the story of Walker's journeyings should be written.

To honor this neglected pioneer traveler and explorer, whose first visit to California, which occurred a full century ago, had an important bearing upon this state's destiny, I requested Mr. Douglas S. Watson, editor of the California Historical Society's Quarterly, *to gather and examine all the evidence obtainable concerning the exploits of Joseph Reddeford Walker and arrange it for publication. The bibliography at the end of this volume sets forth the sources from which Mr. Watson has drawn.*

West Wind *is the result of his efforts and my tribute to a great pathfinder.*

PERCY H. BOOTH

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WEST WIND

THE WEST WIND AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE

SOLID MERCHANTS, governors of the London Company, were gathered round the council board in smug comfort and security.

Jamestown in Virginia had just been settled. To Captain Smith and his fellow colonists the Board of the London Company was about to send a supply ship under the command of Captain Newport. It was September 1608, and these worthy gentlemen, who had embarked their capital in the enterprise, were engaged in drawing up instructions to serve Captain Newport as a guide in his conduct of the voyage.

"And we must know what lies beyond our settlement in Virginia," urged one.

"Write that into Captain Newport's instructions," decided the chairman, and forthwith it was made plain that London had felt the mysterious influence of the West Wind and that Captain Newport, once his cargo was safely landed, should undertake an exploration into that vast unknown land beyond the hazy Blue Ridge from whence the breezes blew down the James River.

The voyage was successful. Captain Newport brought his vessel to an-

chor before the infant colony, and stepping ashore, conferred with Captain John Smith. To him he showed his instructions; they were definite and admitted of no delay.

"Of course you will have to do as you are bidden," observed Captain Smith, "but none-the-less the Governors of the London Company are fools. They should busy themselves with the support of Jamestown. There will be time enough, later on, for exploration. This colony needs their earnest efforts now; all their attention."

But Captain Newport sallied forth only to return without having attained his object. The hazy Blue Ridge remained untrodden ground. The obstacles in his path were then insurmountable, and so they remained during long years.

None ventured from Virginia into the mountains that marked the western horizon, no one tracked the West Wind to its lair. Mystery hid the great beyond like a curtain, yet there was constant talk of expeditions to lay bare its secrets.

And then in 1653 in response to many applications the governing body of the Colony passed an enactment. "Whereas," it ran, "divers gentlemen have a voluntarie desire to discover the Mountains and have supplicated for lycence to this Assembly... that order be granted unto any for so doing. Provided they go with a considerable strength and ammunition."

Yet even with this encouragement nothing was done. And time ran on until energetic Alexander Spotswood landed in Virginia as Lieutenant Governor of the province.

Spotswood found that the West began but a few miles back from tidewater. From that frontier lay vast stretches of country extending no one knew how far. Somewhere in that distant West Drake had landed, calling his discovery New Albion. La Salle had led his French down the Mississippi; the trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company had ventured into the great northwest; the French had made settlements at Kaskasia in 1700; in Detroit in 1701; in Mobile in 1702, and they had established Vin-

cennes in 1705. But no Englishman had yet braved the dangers of the wilderness. Governor Spotswood was to make the first attempt.

Two years before the French under Bienville founded New Orleans, Spotswood set out. This was in 1716. On a bright August day he gathered his party about him. The venturesome among the gentlemen of Virginia flocked to the governor's aid once the decision to make the journey was made known. Some fifty Virginians with their black servants made up the personnel. There were Indian guides to show the way, and a complete complement of pack animals to carry the necessary comforts and provisions. Never did explorers set forth with greater attention to personal comfort. Nothing was lacking to make this attempt to penetrate the wilderness of the West as near a pleasure jaunt as possible. From the vineyards along the Rapidan, planted by German colonists from the Rhineland, came wine in abundance. Nor were cherry brandy and cognac forgotten; it is even recorded that champagne "popped merrily in the wilderness."

Song and laughter made light of the obstacles encountered. The Shenandoah Valley was reached, and there the governor bestowed the name of "Euphrates" upon the river, a lack of appropriateness since remedied. Then followed the climbing of the rocky, mountainous country that lay beyond. Horseshoes in quantity had been provided against just such a contingency and they were necessary, for, while in the Virginia lowlands animals went unshod, here protection against the rough terrain was essential.

The highest peak was scaled, and there, after cutting the name of George I into the face of a cliff, His Majesty's health was pledged in champagne, and after naming a lower and adjoining summit in the governor's honor, the party began the return journey.

The West had been penetrated by English-speaking men for the first time, and as they had stood with their backs to the east they had looked forth into the great wilderness that lay between them and that New Albion Drake had discovered in 1579.

Accomplishment and a safe return warranted a feast. To his board Gov-

ernor Spotswood gathered his adventurous companions and there after the bounteous repast he revealed the great surprise he had in store.

The Reverend Hugh Jones, preaching to his congregation at Bruton later, told them that "The governor presented each of his companions with a golden horseshoe, some of which I have seen, studded with valuable stones, resembling the heads of nails, with the inscription 'Sic juvat transcendere montes:'"—Thus it is a pleasure to cross the mountains.

In such fashion it was that the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe sprang into being. "This," explained the Reverend Hugh, "he instituted to encourage gentlemen to venture backwards and make discoveries and new settlements, any gentlemen being entitled to wear this golden shoe that can prove his having drunk His Majesty's health upon Mount George."

The West was now officially open to exploration. How English speaking men took up the task, how they tracked the West Wind to the shores of the Pacific, where Drake had landed and which he had named New Albion centuries before, is the history of the occupation of this continent, and the life story of Joseph Reddeford Walker.

Chapter I

VIRGINIA, TENNESSEE, MISSOURI

THE WALKER FAMILY were transcontinentalists. They moved across what is now the United States far in advance of the common herd. They were pioneers to the pioneers—pathfinders—who blazed the trail civilization was to follow, and as such, save for the fact that they had not drunk George the First's health, being good Americans, they were entitled to wear the decoration Governor Spotswood had founded after his jaunt into the then Farthest West.

The spirit of adventure flamed in the breast of the elder Walker, head of the family. Traces of his movements may be gathered from two of Virginia's counties before we find him breasting the mountains, where Governor Spotswood carved his sovereign's name, to establish his home in the wilds of Tennessee. One son, Joel P. Walker, was born in Goochland County, Virginia. Later we find the Walkers in Rockbridge County in the same state, but in 1798 they had settled in Roane County in Tennessee, some few miles westward of Knoxville, then little more than a blockhouse or place of refuge whither the venturesome pioneers might gather in case of need.

Indian warfare and the growing of crops filled the days of those early settlers. A trusty long rifle, muzzle-loading of course, was their constant

companion whether at home in their rude cabins, or in the field plowing behind slow-paced oxen.

In a clearing overlooking the Tennessee river Father Walker had built a fortress-like home. An acre or two of Indian corn had been grown nearby and harvested, as the scattered stubble showed. And surrounding all was a forest, now bare of leaves, for it was winter.

During the night of December 13, 1798 a male child was born in that stronghold farmstead on the bank of the Tennessee, and the West Wind soughing through naked forest trees and moaning round the mud and stone chimney all but drowned his first feeble cries; the West Wind he was destined to face all the days of his life. Mother and father agreed upon a name for the child; Joseph Reddeford Walker, much too long by far for the rough frontiersmen and mountaineers he was later to make his companions. They were content to call him Joe Walker, and Joe Walker he became.

Like all frontier boys Joe grew up to know that his long rifle was to be his best friend and inseparable companion. Indians and their ways were an open book to him. He rode, shot, trapped, hunted, plowed and harvested as befitted a pioneer, a worthy son of a worthy father.

The elder Walker died when Joe was quite young, but he left five sons to bear his name and to spread their fame throughout the West: Joel, Joe, Sam, Ike and John.

Family tradition has it that John perished in the immortal defense of the Alamo with Davy Crockett; that Isaac lost his life in battle with the Mormons in Arizona, and that Samuel died while crossing the plains in '49. Joel lived to a ripe old age in California, for he, like a true Knight of the Golden Horseshoe, reached the Farthest West.

Joel had volunteered for the Florida War under General Andrew Jackson in 1818, and upon his return to Tennessee he found that Joe Walker had trekked with the rest of the family to Missouri, to the very frontier. Tennessee was becoming much too thickly settled, there were too many

neighbors. The Walkers needed more elbow room. Out on the extreme western boundary of Missouri, a few miles south of Fort Osage, now the town of Sibley on the bank of the Big Muddy, and near the site of today's Kansas City, Joe Walker found what he wanted. What was later to become Jackson County welcomed the Walkers with open arms; it had need of just such folk.

This move was made in 1818, and when Joel returned from the Florida War in October of the following year he joined forces with Abraham McClelland, later his brother-in-law, and set out from Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee by ox-team to make the six week long journey to the new Walker home.

There he did what all pioneers did. He put in a crop, renting government land surrounding Fort Osage for that purpose. Once again the five Walker brothers were reunited with their mother and sisters. All accounts agree that all were six feet or over in height, and of powerful frame. These stalwart sons were the mother's pride. They launched into trade with the Indians when they were not busy with the crops. The vast unknown West now lay at their very door and setting sun seemed to beckon them on and on. All five were soon to win their spurs as true Knights of the Golden Horseshoe.

Chapter II

SANTA FÉ

SEÑOR FACUNDO MELGARES was the last of Spain's Royal Governors in New Mexico. His Excellency ruled that far-away province from 1818 until Mexican Independence was acknowledged in 1822. Vast prairies crowded with unnumbered buffalo and roving bands of Indians; Pawnees, Sioux, Comanches, Arapahoes, and forbidding, snow-capped mountains separated the American frontier settlements from Santa Fé, the sleepy capital where Señor Melgares guided the destinies of Spanish sovereignty.

Trade with New Mexico was prohibited by the law of Spain, jealous of the ever nearing approach of the westward-moving Americans. But to Joe Walker such a condition seemed an opportunity; if he could successfully placate the Spanish officials, the results would be lucrative. He took that chance.

In the spring of 1820 Walker joined a party of trappers bound for the Rockies, then just beginning to rouse the interest of the seeker after peltries. With him he carried goods for trade. The party started off toward the Platte, turned south through the parks of Colorado, hunting and trapping as they went. Beaver were plentiful. The streams were virgin, but as they

neared the New Mexican frontier fear that their goods would be confiscated led Joe Walker and his companions to *cache* their belongings on the banks of the upper Arkansas before venturing into New Mexico and Santa Fé. It was well that they did.

When the band approached the New Mexican capital, they were met by the military, arrested and promptly thrown into jail. It began to look as though Joe Walker's essay as a Santa Fé trader would cease even before it began; but for a fortuitous circumstance, such might have been the case. Day after day passed in the durance of the New Mexican *calabozo*. The situation seemed hopeless, but from what Joe Walker could gather from his guards' conversation there was something on foot, something Señor Melgares hoped to accomplish but feared to attempt.

Marauding Pawnees thumbed their noses at the Spanish and their attempts to prevent the Indians' raiding expeditions. The might and power of Spain were set at naught by the savages. Accustomed to the docility of the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande valley, the armed force under His Excellency did not know how to circumvent the ever-present danger of raids by the Indians from the north.

Joe Walker thought out a plan of action. By signs and in halting and broken Spanish, Spanish he had picked up during his incarceration, he made known to his jailers that he wished to speak to the governor in person. It took much explaining to make his guards understand what he wanted, but at length word was carried to His Excellency that one of the American prisoners had something to divulge, and Señor Melgares graciously consented to interview him.

Walker offered to undertake the taming of the offending Pawnees, provided he and his straight-shooting companions were freed, given such military support as the governor could provide, but leaving the conduct of the affair in Walker's hands.

There were many conferences. Some wise-acres shook their heads. Others reminded the governor that the law was inflexible, and that since

he had the offending Americans in jail, he should keep them there. In the end, Walker prevailed.

With the assistance of some friendly Sioux he encountered on the march, but lacking the active cooperation of the lazy Spanish soldiery, Walker and his companions surprised the enemy. Straight-shooting Americans, fearless and crafty in Indian warfare, won the day, much to the surprise and delight of their Spanish-speaking companions who rushed in valiantly when victory seemed certain.

A part of Walker's bargain was freedom to trade if successful. The battle over, he reminded the Spanish of their promise and set off to dig up his *caches* on the Arkansas. Here we must leave him, and return to Missouri to pick up the movements of his brother Joel.

Stephen Cooper in the spring of 1822 evolved the same idea that had occurred to Joe Walker two years previously. He believed that trade with the Spanish in Santa Fé would be highly profitable. At Franklin on the Missouri he gathered a party of thirty frontiersmen about him, among them Joel Walker, Joe's older brother.

Toward the end of May the expedition started. All went well until they reached the upper Arkansas. There they ran into countless buffalo and Indians. In the early hours of June 1st, just at dawn, a shot resounded, waking the careless camp.

"Indians!" cried the surprised traders.

"They've stampeded the horses!" warned one of the men, and naked as he was, Joel Walker took up the pursuit on foot, running a mile to no purpose. Fifty horses constituted the booty. But nine animals remained. To go forward without adequate pack trains and mounts was inviting failure, so it was decided that Cooper, Bird, McKenny and Joel Walker should return to the settlements for horses, while the rest of the party should continue on toward Santa Fé; the four who went back for animals to overtake the others en route.

Disaster overtook the marchers. They cut across country in an endeavor

"I TOOK YOU FOR AN INJUN"

to shorten distance. Their troubles began. For a day and a half they were without water, and in this condition Joel Walker and his companions found them on their return. The party had scattered. One group of eighteen men had clung together. Joel guided these to a pond in the prairie where for two days he tended them, keeping the thirsty buffalo away from the precious water.

From the skin of a buffalo's thigh he fashioned a water sack, filled it, and went in search of the missing men. It came on to hail. A storm of great violence swept the prairie. After a night of terrific discomfort, Joel Walker encountered two of the men, then a band of seven.

The precious water saved their lives.

All were now accounted for save Will Huddard. He was finally found, a pitiable and awful sight. Even after the lapse of half a century Joel Walker, steeled as he was to hardship and bloodshed, shuddered as he told the tale.

Crazy with thirst, Huddard wandered from his fellows. His strength was waning. His tongue was purple. His eyes filmed. His legs almost refused to hold him. Thus he staggered along. A lone buffalo bull strayed over a rise. Huddard summoned all his force; raised his rifle; fired. The lucky shot brought the beast to his knees and Huddard crawled savagely toward him. His knife dispatched the animal, and ripping open the carcass, Huddard, bearded and with long unkempt, flowing hair, plunged forward to slake his dire thirst with blood. Thus Joel Walker found him; a horrid sight, dripping with gore from head to foot.

After Huddard's rescue, the party moved on to a camp beside the Arkansas where the invalids were restored to strength. While there a lone horseman was descried.

"An Indian!" cried the man on watch.

Joel Walker came to his side. The horseman was approaching at an easy lope, his long hair rising and falling with the horse's every movement.

"A lone Indian!" cried Walker in wonderment, but as the on-comer neared he gave a shout.

It was Joe Walker returning from Santa Fé, after his brush with the Pawnees, to dig up his *caches*.

There on the prairies the two brothers met after a separation of two years. "I took you for an Injun!" was Joel's greeting.

Joe Walker *un-cached* his trade goods and joined the Cooper band, and the united party set their faces toward the Mexican settlements.

In recounting his experiences in after years Joel said: "This was the first trip ever made from Missouri to Santa Fé." In this he was quite correct, for Joe Walker had gone to the same destination in a round-about way.

At Santa Fé they found that Joe Walker had opened the way; the Mexicans begrudgingly made good their promise of non-interference. Trade was good. "Two bales of bleached domestic cotton sold for $45.00 a bale. A little looking glass worth ten cents was easily sold for one dollar."

While at Santa Fé an old woman came to their camp to caution them. "You are among bad, bad people," she warned. "But if they start to imprison you, you with your men and your rifles could easily take the town." As all the goods had been disposed of, they took leave of their hosts, keeping in mind the old woman's timely advice, and started back for Missouri which they reached without further adventure.

Chapter III

BREAKING THE CRUST

ALONG THE paved highways of today's Kansas are red granite milestones marking the site of the Old Santa Fé Trail. These are reminiscent of the task which Joe Walker undertook after his return to Missouri from his first journey into New Mexico. The yoke of Spain had been thrown off, Mexico no longer acknowledged a trans-Atlantic sovereign, and the distant province of New Mexico with its scattered white population, its Indian Pueblos dotting the course of the Rio Grande, and its ruling *ricos* huddled for safety and comfort in the capital town of Santa Fé fell under the rule of Francisco Xavier Chavez who styled himself *jefe politico.* In fact he was governor, but under the new regime with its more democratic ideas the former designation smacked too much of royalty.

The possibilities of trade between the United States and the now independent nation to the southwest took the fancy of those who directed the affairs of our government in Washington. The first caravan to Santa Fé under Stephen Cooper had shown what might be expected of a commerce intrepid men could conduct if some slight assistance were given by the federal government. Money was appropriated for the survey and marking of the route to the New Mexican towns from the Missouri river, and Joe Walker was engaged to guide the engineers who had the job in hand.

His recommendations for the position were many; he knew the route, he understood Indians and Indian warfare, and he knew how to subsist, how to obtain food both for himself and those dependent upon him, thanks to his long rifle.

The year 1824 saw the survey party leave the settlements and strike out into the trackless prairies. Indians and herds of buffalo roamed across their path, the only living things that occupied Joe Walker's thoughts. Indians meant danger; buffalo, food. It was Joe Walker's task to look after both while his companions went on with their work.

The occasional bands of savages they met marveled at the mounds of earth the survey crews threw up from time to time; these were but markers to designate the trail. Each high point on the route was the site of one of these piles, and they were so situated that from one the next was visible. In a country where stone was obtainable, cairns of rock would have been used, but the Kansas prairie was devoid of such material, forcing the surveyors to resort to a temporary expedient which winter rains soon leveled. The absence of trees, save along the few rivers and their tributaries, prevented the erection of wooden guides to mark the way.

From all accounts the expedition was not crowned with the success anticipated. The elements were unkind to the party's efforts. One good storm destroyed what hours of toil had accomplished. The earth mounds soon were obliterated, but Joe Walker always maintained that the effort made to lay out the route should be considered as an advance in the right direction, for in his own words, "It served to break the crust."

Years later caravan after caravan, following the same trail, made a visible road over which the growing trade with Santa Fé and the towns on the Rio Grande was carried, first by pack trains, and then by long lines of covered wagons.

The vicinity of Fort Osage where the Walker family had made their home was filling up with adventurous spirits, men driven to the frontier by many causes; some seeking freedom from inquiring peace officers in

their former haunts. Here, they felt, they would be undisturbed. There were others who were drawn by tales of profitable trade both with the Indians and the Spanish-speaking people of New Mexico, while still others came seeking the possibilities of the newly opened fur trade in the Rockies.

With the advent of the white man, the Indians became less troublesome. Finally the government decided to give up its military establishment at Fort Osage, and to permit the settlers to organize themselves into a civil community. This was the state of affairs when Joe Walker returned from helping mark the Santa Fé Trail. The legislature of Missouri passed an act in 1827 creating Jackson County, and the inhabitants looked about for suitable men to establish the new government. Foremost in their minds was the necessity of having a sheriff who not only possessed integrity and the respect of his fellow citizens, but who was known to be possessed of outstanding courage. It required a brave and fearless man to keep the lawless and restless frontiersmen in order. The choice fell upon Joe Walker. He was elected the first sheriff of Jackson County by acclaimation, a difficult post he held with outstanding success for two successive terms of two years each.

In the organization of the county Joe Walker's advice was often sought by the steering committee having the matter in hand. A site for the county seat was to be decided upon, likewise a name for the new town. Joe Walker selected both, and his choice was Independence, long famous as the point of departure for Santa Fé and later for Oregon and California. Independence was the boundary between civilization and the great beyond—there the West began.

Sheriff Joe Walker had his hands full. Keeping order among the rough element that frequented Jackson County was no easy job. Bad men had to be cowed, and they were. Joe's fame as a shot spread rapidly. His total absence of fear was known to every wrong-doer. The saloons and gambling houses that had sprung up about the square in the new town of Independence were breeding places for trouble, but Sheriff Walker's quietly spoken

admonition was usually sufficient to quell matters before they became serious.

Joe Walker's keen appraisal of men dates from this time. He was a man of few words, and these were always said in low tones and without bravado. But there was a sharp glance of his blue eyes that told his listener more than the words themselves. He always had complete command of himself; the law was on his side and he personified its dignity. His reserve did not leave him cold, however. He was as human as a man could be, enjoying a hearty laugh whenever occasion arose, kindly to a fault, and in the administration of justice he tempered inflexibility with horse sense. The fact that his fellow-citizens honored him with a second term as sheriff is proof that he handled his difficult office with success.

The Santa Fé trade was growing. Franklin down the Missouri river soon lost its hold, and it was to Independence that the aspiring merchants flocked to organize their caravans. Horses, mules and oxen were necessary to outfit these trading trains, and Joe Walker saw in this an opportunity. Likewise, the newly organized fur companies needed animals, for they, too, made Independence their starting point. Goods came up the Missouri from St. Louis on wheezy stern-wheelers. These river boats discharged their cargoes at Sibly where Fort Osage formerly frowned upon the muddy stream. From there to Independence was but a few miles. Trains of ox-drawn wagons, three, four, even six yoke to a wagon, creaked through the summer dust, and the spring mud, to carry the cargoes to the great square in Independence where the traders made up their caravans.

When the coming election of 1831 was spoken of and Joe Walker was urged to run a third time for sheriff, he shook his head. The pay of a sheriff in Jackson County, Missouri, in those days was a pittance. Many a man of less resource was making ten times what Joe was getting. He was adamant in his refusal. Honor was a fine thing, but he was satisfied with the honor he had received. He was thirty-three, and it was high time that he make a start on his own account. What he had done so far was only in

the nature of preparation for tasks to come. It behooved him to make a change. Joe wound up his affairs as a sheriff, bid his family goodbye, and launched into a trade which was to determine the course of his after life, only he did not then know it.

From Texas, cattle and horses drifted into the Cherokee Nation in what is now Oklahoma. There was the opportunity Joe was looking for, there he could gather together bands of horses, mules and cattle so greatly needed by the traders who made up their caravans at Independence. Joe headed southward with goods to trade for livestock.

Chapter IV

JOE WALKER MEETS CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE

WHEN Joe Walker mounted his raw-boned roan horse, Tennessee, early in February 1831, the rigors of winter had passed, the first signs of coming spring were in the air; a flight of swallows flew over the great square in Independence as he led his small pack-train past the groups of loungers gathered before the saloons and trading houses. They shouted a farewell at him, and added a friendly wave of godspeed. A mixed lot were these onlookers; Osage Indians, a few Pawnees, mixed-breeds, French Creoles from St. Louis and Louisiana, and rough Tennesseeans and Kentuckians dressed in deerskin, befringed, and soiled from wear. These latter were bearded; their long hair rubbing over their shoulders had left black greasy smears. All wore caps of fur and clung to their long rifles as if expecting instant trouble.

Two of Walker's companions rode in the rear, herding the laden animals forward. Each of these beasts of burden carried three well-wrapped bundles; two slung so as to rest in thongs and straps on either side, the third lashed upon the top of the other two. These packages each weighed about 60 pounds; the three making the usual load for pack-train animals.

Joe Walker had provided sufficient trade goods to give him the number

of four-footed beasts he hoped to drive back to Independence in the month of May. In those days one did not go abuying with coin. Every transaction was swap, and he who understood human nature, especially Indian human nature, might be expected to achieve success.

The road, or rather trail, Joe Walker took led southward, roughly following the western boundary of Missouri. At times it swerved to the right, and the travelers found themselves on the Kansas prairie. They passed Fort Scott and the Osage villages, and drifted southward until they crossed into the watershed of the Grand or Neosho river, down which they made their way to Fort Gibson.

Joe Walker was now in the heart of the Cherokee Nation, for Fort Gibson had long been the headquarters of that region. There the government maintained several companies of the 7th United States Infantry. In 1831 it was a place of consequence. Even Sam Houston had found it a refuge after his departure from Tennessee, and it was there he had spent many a pleasant evening discussing his plans for Texas with the genial commander of B Company, who in his turn had expounded to the man, who was to take such a prominent part in the affairs of the Lone Star Republic, his plans for exploring the unknown West.

Walker made camp under the shelter of the cantonment, then mounted again to pay his respects to its officers. His fame as a pioneer traveler into the Rockies and to Santa Fé had preceded him. He was just the man the Captain of B Company wanted to converse with. When the official visits were over, it was to that officer's quarters that Joe Walker was led.

A bottle was produced. The guest was seated in a comfortable chair, and his host proposed his health.

"You're mighty kind, Captain Bonneville. It sure is fine to sit in a chair again, to be in a house, and to have a gentleman to talk to."

The captain smiled, and passed his hand over his bald head. "I have often heard of you, Joe Walker, and the more I have heard, the more I wanted to see and talk with you. You are the very man I need to make a success of the

plan I have had in mind for a long, long time." And the rather foreign looking officer drew up a chair.

They talked until it was time to dine, and after dinner the talk went on. It was late that night when Joe Walker returned to his camp, escorted thither by his host, who on leaving him exacted a promise of more talk the next day. That night Joe Walker fell asleep dreaming of Indian encounters in the Rockies, of trapping for beaver, of exploring the wilds that lay in the great beyond.

Captain Bonneville had told him sketchily of his life, how as a boy he had come from France with his mother and under the guidance of Thomas Paine, the author of "Common Sense," the little pamphlet that had so roused the colonies just before the Revolutionary War; how he had grown up here, gone to West Point; been graduated and how he had been appointed as aide to Lafayette during that great Frenchman's visit to the United States in 1825 as guest of the nation, and how later in his desire for adventure he had applied again for frontier service and that he had been stationed at Fort Gibson ever since.

"And now I want to go exploring, and I want you to serve as my lieutenant and guide. I have talked with my good friend Michel Cerré of St. Louis about an expedition into the Rockies for furs. He agrees with me that it would be profitable. Do you think so?"

"Yes, Captain, I do," answered Joe Walker.

"Will you be at leisure to go next year?"

"Yes, I think so, Captain," said Joe cautiously.

"Well, tomorrow we will go more definitely into our plans."

It is small wonder then that Joe Walker dreamed of the wide open spaces and Indians that night. His imagination was fired. Bonneville was a type of man he had not come in contact with before; a polished and educated gentleman who had traveled in Europe, for when Lafayette returned to France after his epochal visit in 1825, Bonneville had accompanied him and remained months as the great Frenchman's guest. Joe Walker was

drawn to his host. Here was a man, he felt, who, while he admitted that he knew the fur trade only by hearsay and casual contact with the rough trappers and traders who drifted from time to time into Fort Gibson, nevertheless had set his heart upon adventure and who was willing to gather about him those best qualified to guide him.

Captain Bonneville had confided to Joe Walker that the government had acceded to his request to be placed on detached service beginning February 25th and that the scene of his labors for the next few months would be in the Osage Nation where he expected to gather information which would forward his future plans.

Before Joe Walker left Fort Gibson he and Captain Bonneville had discussed the intended venture from all angles, and Joe had agreed to join up, provided the Captain could obtain the financial support that would be necessary. Again Bonneville wrote to the War Department. This time it was a furlough for six months that he wanted. If this should be granted, he would go to New York where his friend, Alfred Seton, resided. Bonneville felt that Seton, an old Astor man, who had made his way back from Astoria overland after the British had taken possession of that post during the War of 1812, would not only join in backing the enterprise but would be instrumental in inducing others to do so. With Michel Sylvestre Cerré of St. Louis ready to take charge of the business end of the fur venture, with Joe Walker as guide and counsellor, and with funds from his eastern friends, the Bonneville plan should leave nothing wanting to make it a success.

When it came time for Joe Walker to take his departure, Captain Bonneville's cup of happiness was brimming. His imagination had obliterated all obstacles. He felt certain that his request for a furlough would be granted, which it was on April 3, 1831. Bonneville made all haste to reach St. Louis, where he spent days arranging with Cerré for his participation in the great enterprise, then hurried on to New York. Joe Walker had given his promise to cooperate with Cerré in the make-up of the expedition's

personnel, and had taken upon himself the transport arrangements, which were to be of a new order, for Joe had assured the Captain that it would be possible to take wagons into the heart of the Rockies, wagons drawn by mules and horses, and thus carry larger stocks of trade goods to barter for beaver pelts than if the usual pack trains were used.

Joe Walker went back to Independence with the cattle, mules and horses he had been able to pick up in trade, arriving in time to sell his animals successfully to the trappers and traders who left for the West early in the summer of 1831. He had the fall and winter before him in which to carry out the plans for the expedition Captain Bonneville was to lead the next year. There was much to do; and he went at his task with a will when he received the letter from New York telling him to go ahead.

Bonneville wrote that he had seen his friend Alfred Seton, that the money for the enterprise had been obtained, and that he had journeyed to Washington where he had laid his plans before Major General Alexander Macomb, commanding officer of the army, and that that gentleman was in hearty agreement with it, especially as Bonneville had offered to make it his business to note the numbers of the various Indian tribes, their fighting qualities, their disposition toward the American government, and in addition to map as much of those little known regions of the Rockies as he would visit in his trading and trapping operations. The up-shot of the interview with General Macomb was a two-year leave, dated August 3, 1831, which was sent to Captain Bonneville at his New York address.

All was settled. Joe Walker got busy, and while the Captain hastened back to St. Louis to confer with Michel Cerré, he began to pick and choose from among the frontiersmen and mountaineers who were available. What remain of the year 1831 and the spring of 1832 was devoted to the business at hand. There was much to be done, for Captain Bonneville wished to lead the best equipped party to the mountains that ever set out from Independence. Everything was to be of the best, and the number of men who were to make up the complement of the party was to be

anything but niggardly. One hundred and ten men—trappers, hunters, guides, servants, were to be enlisted—a small army, and food and trade goods sufficient for two years had to be bought, packed and shipped from far away St. Louis to the landing on the Missouri river where Fort Osage had once stood.

By the middle of April 1832 Joe Walker had things in shape for the departure which Captain Bonneville had scheduled for the first of May.

Chapter V

THE ROAD TO THE ROCKIES

MAY FIRST 1832 came at last, and everything was ready. Twenty stout wagons, laden with food and trade goods, drawn by sturdy horses and splendid Missouri mules, were lined up at the Missouri river landing, recently christened Sibley, where the government outpost had been maintained until 1827. All waited for the word to start.

Seldom had the Sibley landing seen such bustle. Men on horseback galloped here and there taking note of last moment preparations. Captain Bonneville, mounted, and togged out in deerskin, surveyed the caravan with an appraising eye. Evidently he was satisfied, for he raised his arm in signal to Joe Walker who had taken station at the head of the line.

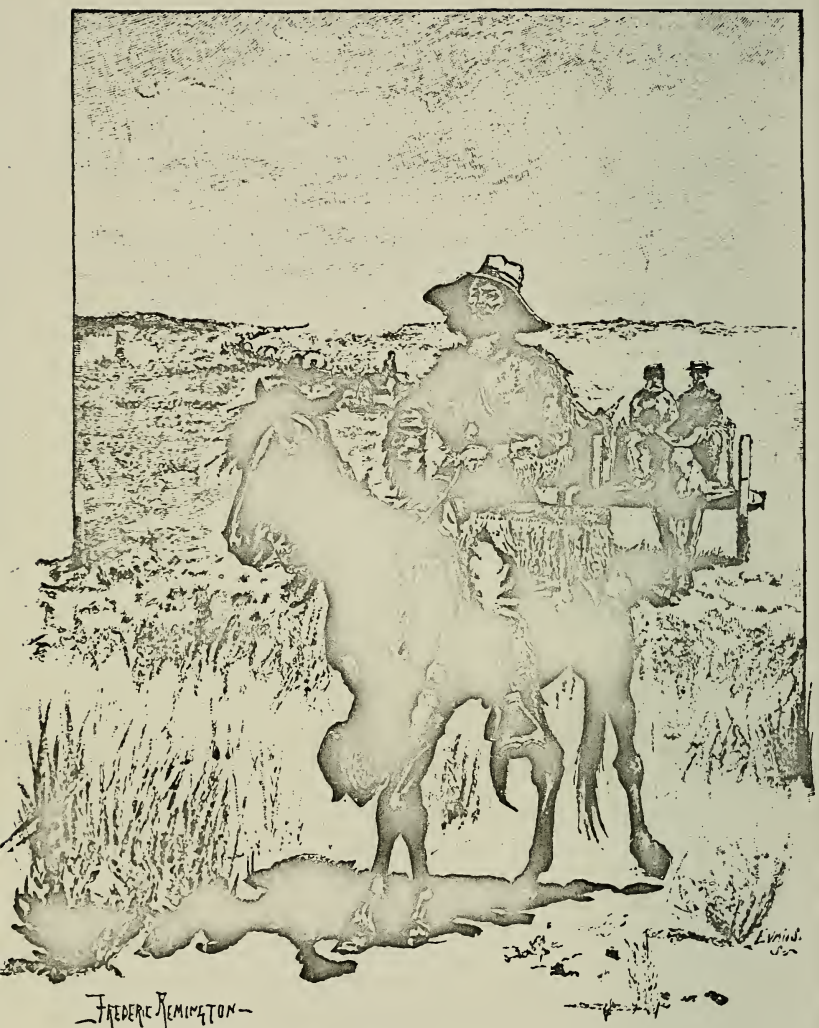
"Catch up!" he ordered, and amid a cracking of whips and volleys of rough language, the wheels began to move. It had rained the night before. Mud was thick on the dirt road. The mules and horses slid and slipped. Progress was slow, but at length the file of wagons passed Captain Bonneville who watched them with pride and as the last of the line came abreast, he spurred his horse and joined Joe Walker at the head of the column.

The late spring rains had swept the country, transforming the usually dusty tracks that went by the name of roads, mere clearings through the

forest-covered rolling land, into quagmires. It took the caravan five days to reach Independence but fifteen miles from the river landing, and a week more to march to the banks of the Kansas river which lay on the western boundary of Missouri. Often deep cuts had to be made down the steep banks of small streams so that the heavy wagons and their loads could be brought to the farther side.

The Kansas river was crossed and the party moved forward in marching order. Two lines of wagons were formed. The loose animals were driven between, and thus the long journey across the prairie to the Platte, or Nebraska river as it was sometimes called in those days, began. The train made slow progress. Twenty days were required to reach the river goal but there was no murmuring for it was more like a pleasure excursion than serious business, this march of theirs. The old trappers of the party took life easy while they could, knowing that it would be far different when once they reached the mountains. The greenhorns listened open-mouthed to the tales of Indians and narrow escapes which the veterans amused themselves by telling. Even Joe Walker as he rode ahead with Captain Bonneville was induced to talk of his experiences and those of men like Jedediah Smith, for news that Smith had lost his life the previous summer at the hands of Comanche Indians on the Cimarron had drifted into Independence during the spring and was still the topic of conversation.

Joe Walker told the Captain that he knew Smith intimately, that he had often talked with him about his long journey into California in the fall of 1826, and of how Smith and his men had arrived at the Mission of San Gabriel to the great surprise of the padres. Smith's difficulties with the Mexican officials interested Bonneville greatly, and as Walker briefly recounted how Smith had overcome them and had led his men into the great California valley, leaving them there to hunt during the summer while he returned with two companions over the Sierra Nevada to the rendezvous of that year at Bear river, Bonneville's astonishment increased. Smith's return to California, the massacre of most of his men by the



ON THE WAY TO THE PLATTE

Mohave Indians at the crossing of the Colorado; his joining with the party he had left in California; their imprisonment in Monterey; their release; and their journey northward to their final catastrophe on the Umpqua river in Oregon where after a second massacre but two others and Smith remained to make their way empty-handed to the Hudson's Bay station at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia; the rescue of their furs by Dr. McLoughlin of the great British company and their purchase by that gentleman for $20,000 excited Bonneville's imagination. Often he returned to Smith's experiences as the first overland traveler to reach California. This and the party's fur catch for which Dr. McLoughlin of the Hudson's Bay Company paid $20,000 left an indelible impression. Captain Bonneville time and again brought them into the conversation during the seemingly endless days of prairie travel.

Another thing seemed to interest him greatly. This was the occasional bands of Indians they encountered on the way. Nothing would do but that the caravan must stop while the Captain entertained the visitors, passed the pipe of peace, and chatted through an interpreter, usually Joe Walker himself.

The discipline of the caravan was almost military, enough so as to be noticeable even to the savage nomads. Universally they referred to its leader as the "bald-headed chief," a title that stuck to him throughout his stay in the mountains.

On June 2nd the Platte river was reached at a point some twenty-five miles downstream from Grand Island, but as it was there far too wide—over a mile, in fact—to attempt its crossing, the train headed west along the south bank. For more than one hundred and twenty-five miles this course was followed, and then on the 11th of June the forks of the river were reached. This was familiar ground to Joe Walker for this had been his route when he had made his first trip into Santa Fé in 1820. Two days longer the south fork was followed, and then under Joe Walker's advice the fording of this branch was undertaken.

This was a task of no mean labor, for quicksands made it unsafe to drive laden wagons through the stream. The huge vehicles were dismantled, their wheels were removed, and the beds, covered with buffalo hides and smeared with tallow and ashed for caulking, were transformed into boats which, under the guidance of three men, were poled across the river to the north bank. The operation took two days but was successfully carried out. The animals were herded across, and the march began once more. When they neared the main river the aspect of the country changed greatly. The prospect was no longer monotonous rolling prairie over which the welcome West Wind blew its cooling breezes to allay the heat of the hot summer days, but rugged cliffs and fantastic rock forms lined the valley through which the Platte flowed.

Chimney Rock rose before them like a monument erected by man. This and Scott's Bluff the Captain noted in his diary, but the presence of endless herds of buffalo made more of an impression upon the party than even the beauties of Nature. Here was fresh meat for the asking, and soon the dearth which had ruled the caravan during the latter part of its march over the prairie came to an end. That evening the savory odor of roasting buffalo steaks rose from the campfire of each mess.

An advance guard of scouts and hunters rode before the train. This precaution not only served as protection but was a source of supply for the caravan's larder. The afternoon of June 24th this vanguard came galloping back waving their fur caps and shouting, when within hearing distance: "Indians! Indians!"

Soon a party of sixty braves in war dress made their appearance, sallying out from one of the deep gullies which seamed the high land above the river along which the Bonneville party was travelling. Immediately the caravan was halted and formed into a hollow square for defense, while Captain Bonneville, Joe Walker and a half dozen mountain men advanced to meet the band who proved to be Crow Indians, a war party in pursuit of a number of Cheyenne braves who after rushing the Crow lodges and

killing one man had made off. Later the Crow chief told Captain Bonneville that they had been on the trail of their enemies for more than twenty-five days.

With true Indian bravado the Crows came forward at a gallop, broke ranks as they neared, and circling the Captain and his party, greeted them with whoops and war cries, then reining their ponies, they dismounted and extended their hands as a sign of friendship. Joe Walker motioned to their guests to be seated, and doing likewise, produced a pipe, carefully loaded it, lit it, and passing it to Captain Bonneville, the smoke of peace began. These Indians begged to remain with the fur traders' camp overnight, and although their reputation as great horse-thieves was widespread, thanks to the vigilance maintained, the night passed without incident.

Two days later the caravan reached the Laramie fork, a spot well known later to all California emigrants who traveled the South Pass route, for there three years later was built the stronghold to which was given the name Fort William Sublette; afterwards to be known as Fort Laramie. The route now became increasingly difficult. Often gullies had to be filled so that the wagons might cross, and at times it was even necessary to lower the vehicles over precipices by means of ropes. The dry atmosphere also made itself felt, for the caravan had attained considerable elevation, and the wagon wheels constantly needed attention. Spokes, felloes and hubs became loosened through the drying of the wood so that it was necessary to remove the iron tires, nail strips of wood about the circumferences of the wheels, and heating the tires to a glowing heat, replace them and shrink them on by rapid cooling with water.

The Crow warriors crossed their route again on July 1st. This time they were boastful and jubilant. From the spears of five of the party dangled scalps of the Cheyenne braves they had met and "rubbed out," as the mountain men phrased it.

Nothing of consequence occurred for days. They left the course of the Platte on July 12th and two days later were following the Sweetwater.

Then came the Continental divide and on the 25th of July camp was made on the banks of a small stream which, because of the trout swimming in it, they knew flowed toward the Pacific. They were now in the midst of snow-capped summits of the Rockies; at their right rose the Wind River Mountains, before them in the distance was the range that lay to the westward of Green river where Captain Bonneville determined to encamp, abandon his wagons and organize his hunting parties.

The next day an early start was made, for before them lay the wide desert-like valley to be crossed before reaching Green river. Toward noon clouds of dust were descried in their rear. The cry of "Indians!" again ran through the caravan and preparations were instantly made for defense. Soon a party of some fifty horsemen approached who proved to be trappers under the leadership of Fontenelle, heading for the American Fur Company's post on the Yellowstone.

Fontenelle was one of Joe Walker's old friends, and as he drew up alongside of Captain Bonneville and his lieutenant, Joe's greeting was, "You seem to be in a powerful hurry to get where you're going, brother."

"And so would you be," returned Fontenelle, "if a band of traders like yours had been ahead of you, eating up all the feed. We're moving on. Got to get to the Green river by night, and then locate some free trappers roaming round these parts and get them to join up with us."

The Bonneville party watched the American Fur Company's packtrain move off westward and then followed. As it turned out, Fontenelle did reach the river that night, but in such an exhausted condition that many of his men were left behind; the next day they straggled in more dead than alive.

That night the Bonneville train bivoucked in the waterless desert, turning their animals loose at dawn to get what moisture they could from the dew on the scant herbage, and it was late that day when they reached the banks of Green river.

Fontenelle's camp lay a short distance upstream. There was some frater-

nizing, as was usual when two trapping parties met. All this was greatly to Bonneville's disadvantage, for Fontenelle, no amateur in the fur trade and recognizing that Bonneville had a small group of Delaware Indian hunters in his party, men known to be of more than usual worth, enticed them away with a promise of one hundred dollars each for the fall hunt.

Bonneville complained bitterly to Joe Walker about this unfair competition, but Joe only shrugged, allowing that that was the way they did things in the mountains. "But," he suggested, "there's nothing to keep us from meeting up with those free trappers Fontenelle was telling about. Say the word, and I'll find them and bring them in."

The next day while the camp was busy making temporary defenses against Indian surprise, Joe Walker and a companion slipped away on their quest.

Chapter VI

MOUNTAIN MEN

For two weeks Captain Bonneville stayed in camp recruiting his men and animals utterly fagged out by the hardships they had undergone. Toward noon of the 12th of August a dust cloud was seen in the distance and in came Joe Walker with his fellow scout, followed by as picturesque and motley a band as it is possible to imagine. These were the free trappers, men not engaged by any of the fur companies, but nomads who led free-lance lives, who trapped wherever fancy suggested, selling their pelts to whom they pleased, and looking more like Indians than white men, and proud of it. Their dress was extravagant in its make up, riotous with color, and even their swagger or walk was in imitation of the savage braves with whom they often consorted.

Captain Bonneville welcomed them with a show of mountain hospitality. Liquor was dispensed, and trade goods displayed, from which the newcomers selected whatever they thought bright and gaudy enough to deck both themselves and their temporary Indian spouses. The hired trappers of the Bonneville party looked upon their new comrades with something approaching envy. They admired their sturdy Indian ponies, daubed with white or scarlet, the saddles and bridles hung with bright ribbons and hawks bells, and the awed greenhorns stared silently at the notched stocks of their guns, each representing a *coup*, or feat of arms in battle.

Camp was broken up and the party made its way to Horse Creek, the headwaters of Green river. Here fortifications were thrown up, and preparations made for the fall hunt. The men were divided into groups, each with its leader, and a winter rendezvous was appointed by Captain Bonneville on Salmon river, a confluent of the Columbia, for in that section Captain Bonneville had been told beaver were plentiful and the Indians less liable to cause him trouble. When most of the party had been dispersed, the matter of *cacheing* the surplus trade goods and equipment, including the wagons, was undertaken. With great secrecy holes were dug, lined with willow branches, and into them the packages of food and other things were piled. More willow was laid above the trove, and after the dirt had been replaced, and all surplus soil thrown into the stream, camp-fires were lighted over the spot and the horses were driven about to obliterate all signs.

Before Captain Bonneville departed from his Green river camp, Vandenburgh of the American Fur Company appeared at Fontenelle's, seeking supplies and bringing news of Pierre's Hole where the blood-thirsty Blackfeet's attempt to rush the encampment at that rendezvous had culminated in the famous fight in which a few of the whites and many Indians had been killed. The presence of this treacherous tribe was one of the causes of Bonneville's selection of the Salmon river hunting ground.

On August 22nd all was in readiness for departure. The packs were adjusted upon the mules and horses, and Bonneville led his men out of camp. After the usual hardships attendant on crossing the Teton range of the Rockies, they arrived at their destination only to find that game was scarce, and that the more gentle Nez Percés and Flathead Indians in that neighborhood were suffering from that cause.

Here, after camp was established, parties were formed, and the different bands were sent off in various directions. It was now late September. In the higher places snow had already fallen, and the coming winter made it imperative that a food supply be found at once.

Joe Walker was given twenty men and sent off in the quest. Horse Prairie was his destination, and while on this hunt he had an experience with a wandering band of Blackfeet which fastened itself on his memory, leaving an inhibition he carried until his dying day.

Four men had been told off to act as guard. The rest reposed at ease, recruiting themselves from the fatigues of journey, while the animals browsed under what Joe Walker supposed were the watchful eyes of his sentinels. But they, from a feeling of false security and the absence on the prairie of all signs of Indians, became so negligent that upon a suggestion of one of their number that they retire to a near-by growth of willows and enjoy a game of "Old Sledge," a diversion much in vogue among mountain men, all agreed. In the midst of their card playing the firing of a gun and the whoop of an Indian war cry brought the camp up standing.

Seizing his gun, Joe Walker stepped forth from his lodge to find that the Indians were among the mules and horses, some having already mounted, and that a stampede of the rest of the animals was in progress. Cool in an emergency, he called his men about him. Their long rifles barked. One marauding brave after another dropped from his newly acquired mount. The mules aided in the struggle. Bucking and kicking at the intruders, they brought confusion to their ranks. It was not long before the Indians were in retreat toward a bunch of willows. The horses were recovered and the fight began to dislodge the enemy from the shallow pits they had dug for their protection, from which they fired both arrows and their fusees at Walker and his men.

This battle ended with the drawing off of the Indians, but to Joe Walker it remained a classic example of the lack of vigilance which he was wont to cite on all occasions whenever Indians was the topic of talk.

The hunting of buffalo for food and their robes, and the trapping of beaver for their pelts occupied the days of the mountain men of Joe Walker's command.

They were now in the extreme western limits of the buffalo country,

but when word was brought to camp that a herd was nearby a hunt was immediately organized. In this they were assisted by the friendly Nez Percés who had announced the herd's presence. Joe and his men were mounted, the Indians went forth on foot, armed only with spears and bows and arrows. A scout who had been sent on ahead reported that the game was browsing quietly in an adjacent valley. The hunters laid their course accordingly, keeping the West Wind in their faces in order to come upon the buffalo without alarming them. Sallying from a side valley, the horsemen galloped forward eagerly, the Indians running at their side. Soon all was confusion. The herd frightened by the suddenness of the onslaught took to its heels, but in the mad rush to escape there was left behind, here and there, a wounded or dead bull or cow.

Provided now with a plentiful supply of meat, most of which was cut into strips and dried for future use—readily accomplished in the dry air of their elevated situation—the party went about the business of trapping beaver.

This was an operation Joe Walker had followed from childhood. For in Tennessee beaver pelts had passed currently from hand to hand as coin, even the tax collectors of those pioneer days had accepted them in lieu of cash.

Provided with a number of traps and the very necessary vial of "medicine," or castor, the hunter haunts the mountain streams for signs. These are dams thrown across the water-courses by the little animals (to whom scientists have given the imposing Latin name of *Castor Canadensise*), or newly barked trees like aspen or cottonwood, for beaver feed upon the tender bark of the saplings of these mountain growths. Great care is taken to leave no scent of human origin. The traps are placed either close to the bank where the beaver have been feeding, or near the underwater entrances of their burrows. At times a hole is made in the dam, thus lowering the level of the beaver-made pond, which the busy and intelligent animals are quick to repair. In the vicinity of the damage traps are set. A

long strip of bark is attached to the trap which is weighted with a heavy stone and then placed in position. The bark strip is fastened securely to a stake to prevent the trap being dragged away, and the stone serves to hold it under water and thus to drown the beaver when once caught. When these preparations are complete, the "medicine," or castor, comes into play. This is the bait, and is obtained from "the glandular pouches of the male animal, which sometimes contain from two to three ounces. This substance is gently squeezed into an open-mouth vial. The contents of five or six of these castor bags is mixed with nutmeg, twelve or fifteen cloves, and thirty grains of cinnamon in fine powder. The whole is then stirred up with as much whiskey as will give it the consistency of mustard prepared for the table. This mixture must be kept closely corked up, and in four or five days the odor will become more powerful; with care it may be preserved for months without injury." So Halsey Thrasher described its preparation in a small manual he wrote more than a half century ago for the guidance of the amateur in beaver trapping.

Trap, bark strip and stake are smeared with "medicine," and the trapper moves on to set the rest of his string. Until the stream is trapped out he makes his rounds, recovering his catch often by wading knee deep into the icy current, for the beaver when caught swims under water in an endeavor to free himself, and thus drags the heavy stone with him. Held down, he drowns.

The streams in the neighborhood of Horse Prairie were not the best of trapping ground, nevertheless when Joe Walker rejoined Captain Bonneville at the winter rendezvous, his party had a fair catch to show for their efforts.

Winter and spring passed with varying success. Captain Bonneville led his men from the Salmon river country through the mountain passes to the Snake river. The smaller streams were trapped, and here he experienced a taste of the fierce rivalry of the older established fur companies. Milton Sublette with his trappers of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company

outwitted him; and the Indians with whom he hoped to trade refused his tempting goods, preferring to do their business with an agent of the Hudson's Bay Company who had come among them, bare-handed and without his stock, and who was forced to wait in idleness until the arrival of his packtrain with supplies.

Captain Bonneville's thoughts naturally turned to the possibilities of virgin trapping grounds, and the success Jedediah Strong Smith had had in venturing into the far western lands of California. Often as he and Joe Walker rode along together during the early spring days the subject was spoken of, and the plans began to take shape to retrieve the meagre results of Bonneville's first year in the fur business by an expedition to California.

When it came time to journey back to the summer rendezvous at Green river, the details of the venture were practically decided upon. Joe Walker would captain the party, the trade goods and supplies sufficient for a year would be allotted to him to carry out the venture.

Chapter VII

RENDEZVOUS

It is said that Beau Brummel started the fashion. Strolling through St. James Park his beaver hat was the focus of the gazes of admiring groups and at once London hatters were besieged for its duplicate, for every dandy must needs have one.

As a result buckskin clad mountain men roamed the Rockies, searching out every stream and rivulet inhabited by the furry rodents whose pelts were so much in demand. A vast business was launched with St. Louis as its headquarters. Fur companies sprang into being, rivals of the ancient Hudson's Bay Company, all intent upon making the wilderness President Jefferson had bought from Napoleon for fifteen million dollars give up its wealth of beaver skins.

Ashley tapped the vein and made a fortune; Jackson, Sublette and Jedediah Smith uncovered new leads. They had many imitators, and soon yearly packtrains laden with beaver pelts jogged from the Rockies across the prairies to St. Louis, from whence the prized fur was shipped to London to be made into hats, sometimes slangily called "Castors," to grace the heads of men of fashion.

Beaver guided the course of civilization westward. Beaver called into

being a new era. Beaver transformed the restless sons of those first pioneers who had crossed the Alleghanies to brave the dangers of Kentucky and Tennessee into mountain men, explorers and pathfinders.

And beaver created the annual rendezvous.

In the silence of the Rockies, Horse Creek flowed swiftly from the west to mingle its waters with Green river under the shadow of the snow-capped Wind River Mountains. To the north the white crests of the Gros Ventre Range formed the horizon. Westward lay the mass from which rose the Tetons. Box elder, willow and cottonwood trees lined the stream's banks, and in the meadows through which it ran, lush grass, dotted here and there with sage and gay lupin, provided abundant feed for the animals of the beaver-hunters about to descend upon this spot selected the year before for the rendezvous of 1833.

Yesterday here lay a vast silence. Today a few stragglers appeared in small groups, but tomorrow the valley will ring with whoops, and hearty shouts and ribald song of a half a thousand men.

This Green river rendezvous will be the trapper's yearly holiday, the scene of his trading and bartering, and of his carouse.

Bands of Shoshone Indians trailed into the valley, their fat squaws astride tired ponies, dragging the poles for their lodges. Along the stream camps sprang into life. The poles were set up and the buffalo hide coverings wrapped about them. Hobbled horses appeared in the meadow pastures, and the smoke of scores of Indian fires curled upward.

It was mid-July, the season when the beaver's fur is in poor condition so that nothing was lost by this cessation of hunting.

Apart from each other, yet near enough to be neighborly, the rival fur companies established their camps. First the lodge of the "partisan," or leader, was raised, around which the tents of his followers ranged themselves with a rough semblance of order. Horses and mules were herded into the pastures, hobbled, and left under a sentinel's watchful eye.

The rendezvous was a time of jollity, of horse-play, of unrestraint, of

reckless abandon. For ten long months the mountain men had seen only savages and their trapping companions. Now came weeks of relaxation after arduous toil, and all threw themselves into a maelstrom of pleasure with a will. Dusky Indian maidens, dashing on pony-back through the camps, smiled at them. A bit of ribbon, a few hawks bells, some scarlet cloth and the lonely free trapper would have a companion, a helpmeet in his tasks, a slave and a manager of his lodge.

The long wished for supply trains from St. Louis and Independence with trade goods and whiskey arrived. For many that meant that the earnings of a year would vanish overnight. Some would gamble their all away and leave the rendezvous poorer in pocket than when they came, and in debt besides to their "partisan," who would have to advance the supplies necessary for the coming season.

All were clad in buckskin, filthy after a year's usage. New garments would have to be bought, ammunition purchased, and precious coffee and sugar secured to lighten a steady diet of meat.

The motley throng at the Green river rendezvous was made up of a medley of races; mountain men from Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri; French creoles from St. Louis and Louisiana, halfbreeds and Indians from many tribes. There were free trappers, owing allegiance to no man; company hunters, hired at a fixed stipend; French-speaking camp helpers still wedded to the old Hudson's Bay fusee while their English-speaking comrades were all armed with a long rifle, a brace of pistols, and, what became in after-time known universally in the mountains as, a Green river knife.

Moccasins of buckskin covered their feet, buckskin buskins and leggins their legs, and a long shirt of buckskin hung down over their buckskin pantaloons. When new this shirt was gay with fringes, along the arms, across the chest, but as occasion had demanded a thong with which to tie something a handy knife had cut into the ornament. Many still wore their old shirts, hoping for a change in gambling luck to provide a new one.

It was a polyglot assemblage, yet all seemed to understand each other,

and in case the spoken tongue barred intercourse, Indian sign language became a refuge. At night campfires blazed. Groups gathered about them. Talk was pleasant after months of silence. The doings since the last rendezvous were told; told with proper exaggeration. Tall tales were what the trapper and mountain men most liked. They would have served as inspiration even to Baron Munchausen or Paul Bunyan.

Feats of strength were attempted. Here and there a bully asserted his claim to prowess only to have it challenged. Rough and tumble fights ensued in which there were no rules. Gouging and kicking excited no comment. But weapons were taboo. Men fought with the arms and legs God gave them, but even then there were times when blood was spilled. The spectators would then intervene to separate the contestants and potions of fiery alcohol, or what went by the name of whiskey, would be ordered at ruinous prices in which resentment would be drowned. Often a battle ended with the tipsy fighters vowing eternal friendship.

Horse and foot racing drew their crowds, with betting wild and for high stakes. Thus with gambling, drinking and the recounting of unparalleled exploits the days passed.

Captain Bonneville's scattered parties had all returned, one with a report of utter failure, others with meagre results. The *caches* had been opened, and with the arrival of the supply trains of both the Rocky Mountain and the American Fur Companies active trading had begun. The three camps were in a turmoil. None of the famous marts of commerce the world over ever equalled the reckless spending. Whiskey at one dollar a gill was poured out as fast as men could drink it, and prime beaver skins passed as currency. Lucky Shoshone damsels displayed their lovers' gifts, parading with bright ribbons, hawks bells, and gay stuffs about the camps. And amid all the barter the ribald songs of the trapper rang out, for the cup of friendship constantly passed from hand to hand.

Into this ten day period the pent-up emotions of the year were loosed, and the piles of beaver pelts grew before the lodges of the "partisans" of

the three fur companies. Another week and the valley of the Green river would be deserted; the Seeds-ke-dee, as the Indians called it, would flow on to meet the Colorado and thence to the Pacific once again in the silence of the wilderness.

Packtrains bearing the year's catches would be making their way toward St. Louis, and the hunters and trappers would again take up their hard life with its constant menace of Indian warfare and treachery.

Among the free trappers who had drifted into the rendezvous and who had attached themselves to Captain Bonneville's fortunes were two men, George Nidever and Zenas Leonard, members of a party who had encountered a band of vengeful Crow Indians. Their animals and fur catch had been stolen by these savages. Ragged and hoping for better times they had made their way to the Green river camps. In the days to come both of these men were to sing the praises of Joe Walker, soon to become their leader in the great venture Captain Bonneville had decided upon. Those many talks about Jedediah Smith and his trip to California were soon to bear fruit.

Chapter VIII

RESOLUTION SUCCEEDS PERPLEXITY

Benjamin Louis Eulalie Bonneville was at his wits' end. He strode back and forth before his lodge, hands behind his back, head lowered. His furrowed brow showed that he was thinking, thinking hard, and well he might. He was confronted with a serious situation; two, in fact. His leave from the army would expire in October; but two months off, and, if he was to retrieve his fortunes and those of his backers, it was imperative that he should go forward with the fur business. He could not stop now, for all he had to show for the last twelve months was a paltry 4,000 pounds of beaver, not enough by far to pay expenses, let alone a profit. To undertake another year's campaign meant an utter disregard of his leave.

Fortune had not smiled upon the amateur mountain man. All his big notions of success had dwindled down to a reality he had little pleasure in contemplating. Alfred Seton and his friends in New York, who had put their money into the venture, had to be considered. To leave the mountains now would mean that he must account at once to them, and that would require a confession in black and white that the venture was a failure.

The catch of the year should be sent back to St. Louis at once, and

the proper person to take it was Michel Sylvestre Cerré. Four thousand pounds of beaver! Twenty mules would carry that, seventeen, possibly. Fifteen men and Cerré would do the trick. So much for that, then; but what about the rest? The fifteen free trappers of the party which included Leonard and Nidever had increased his numbers to one hundred and twenty-five. Fifteen men sent back with Cerré would leave him in just the same posture he had occupied when he entered the mountains the year before. He had provisions and goods enough for the year to come. Thanks to the wagons he would not need revitualling until the next summer. That was one piece of good luck in the midst of all the gloom. Bonneville halted, and a smile lit up his face. Yes, that was the way out with a good chance to win! Why not?

The adventures of Jedediah Smith swept him to a decision. The great West that began the other side of the Wasatch range was unknown land. Rumors of a river flowing to the Pacific had crystallized on the maps then available. The river even had a name; Mary's or Ogden's river. A river could only mean streams feeding it, and those meant beaver. No one had trapped in that direction. It was virgin ground. Added to that pleasing prospect was the exploring that would be done, the knowledge he would be instrumental in reporting to his superiors of the War Department. Such knowledge might go a long way toward offsetting any infraction of orders; he could plead a justifiable excuse for overstaying his leave.

Bonneville surprised himself at the ease with which he reached a solution. All that remained now was to put his plan into execution, and that he proceeded to do at once. Joe Walker was summoned, and the two talked long and earnestly; Joe saying little, just nodding his head in agreement from time to time. The Captain decided that fifty men with a year's supply of food, ammunition and trade goods would be about right, and since he had plenty of horses, four horses would be allotted to each man. Joe Walker agreed that that would be a fine outfit. With such he ought to make a showing, always provided that the country was what

the Captain hoped it might be. Joe even confessed that he liked exploring better than anything else; that it had always been his dream to march toward the West until he could not take another step without walking into the Pacific.

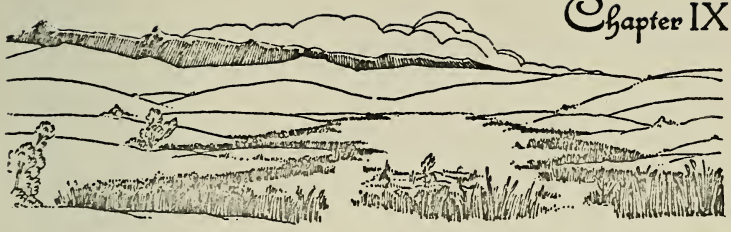
And so Joe Walker got his orders. He was to pick his men—fifty of them, and to organize the party at once. Their destination was to be kept more or less quiet, but it soon was noised about that California was to be their goal, and that they were to trap Mary's river and such streams as might flow into the Great Salt Lake along their route. If Jedediah Smith with a handful of men could trap $20,000 in furs in California, Joe Walker with fifty men and with first rate equipment surely should do twice as much or even better.

Two of the band of free trappers who had drifted into the camp on Horse Creek in the Green river valley rendezvous jumped at the opportunity to go to California. There the winter would be mild, for so they had heard from Hudson's Bay men who had gone to California with Peter Skene Ogden when he had led a party southward from Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. Nidever had suffered from the bleak winds and the severe cold of the Rockies the past winter, and Leonard was out for adventure. The former hired himself as a trapper and hunter, the latter as Joe Walker's clerk. Much of our knowledge of what occurred to this little westward-bound party during the year from July, 1833, to July, 1834, is derived from the book Leonard wrote and published in 1839 at Clearfield, Pennsylvania, after his return to civilization. Incidentally, no other book of western travel has approached the high price collectors have been willing to pay for this little volume. It seems incredible that men would give as much as a thousand dollars for a work having to do with a journey to California in the year 1833!

Before Cerré set out for St. Louis, and Joe Walker left for the great adventure, one thing had to be determined upon. You had to look way ahead in the fur business; a year ahead. A rendezvous must be decided upon for

the coming summer, a place where all the different bands of a company could gather to deliver their catches and get provisions and ammunition. Since Joe Walker was going west, the place of meeting should be as far to the west as possible, and then the Captain had a mind to do his fall and winter hunting in the northwest. Bear river, that flows first north and then bends to the south to empty into Great Salt Lake, was picked. All the people who acknowledged Benjamin Louis Eulalie Bonneville as their "partisan" were told to meet there the coming July—midsummer 1834.

Everything was now ready for the start. Cerré and his men had packed the year's meagre catch of beaver on their mules. Captain Bonneville had his party of some fifty odd men lined up, equipped and waiting the word. Joe Walker's two score and ten itched to be off. July 24, 1833, came at last. The great rendezvous broke up by common consent. Rocky Mountain Fur Company, American Fur Company, the Bonneville Company were all ready to march. At dawn the lodges came down. Mules grunted as the packs were cinched tightly on their backs. The Shoshones drifted off with their dogs barking, and the squaws scolding the squealing children. Joe Walker shook hands with Captain Bonneville, with Michel Cerré. All wished each other good luck. A good-bye, a wave of the hand in parting salute and the start was made. Joe and his men headed for the West, and as he rode in advance of his band he felt an exultation he would have been at a loss to describe. He removed his fur cap and shook out his long hair to the breeze, and a smile spread over his bronzed and bearded features. He was Captain Walker now, acknowledged as such; every man in his company addressed him as captain, and better still he was bent on high adventure, adventure that might lead no one knew whither.



Chapter IX

HEADED FOR THE SHORES OF THE PACIFIC

THE GREAT GREEN river rendezvous of 1833 was over and on the morning of July 24th Captain Walker led his men out of the valley and toward the mountains in the west. It was like a schoolboy's holiday; they sang, joked, shouted. Those hardened hunters and trappers pictured the days in California as days to be filled with romantic and exciting experiences. It was going to be something to talk and brag about.

Zenas Leonard who served as Captain Walker's clerk remarked the carefree attitude of his companions, noting it in his narrative. And he further paid a real tribute to his chief. "Captain Walker," he wrote, "was a man well calculated to undertake a business of this kind. He was well hardened to the hardships of the wilderness—understood the character of the Indians very well—was kind and affable to his men, but at the same time had liberty to command without offense—and to explore unknown regions was his chief delight."

In the Bear river country, the later famous Joe Meek and a number of free trappers met the Walker party. These men asked the Captain permission to join the company when they heard that California was its goal. That extraordinary prevaricator Joe Meek declared years afterwards that he joined the brigade because "it was a feather in a man's cap" to travel to

California since it fitted him to become a pilot as a result of the knowledge he would gain by traveling through the unknown regions.

Four days' travel brought the company to the miserable huts of some Bannock Indians. In sign language Captain Walker talked with their chief and, when he made the savage understand the direction he planned to take, the Indian urged him to provide himself with an abundance of provisions. Desert, desert, nothing but desert, the Bannock chief explained, lay ahead. Captain Walker willingly accepted his advice. They were now within the western limits of the buffalo country and hunts were immediately organized. Great quantities of meat were brought into camp, sliced thin, hung in the sun, and converted into "jerky." When the company started westward again, along the northern shores of Great Salt Lake, each man had sixty pounds of this dried provision in his pack.

Three weeks after leaving Green river they launched into the barrenness of the Great Salt Lake Desert, steering a course calculated to bring them to the headwaters of the mythical river then supposed to flow from Salt Lake, or its vicinity, to the Pacific. They found a trail leading to a spring where Indians were encamped. From these they learned that watering places could be found from time to time on their route, and that trails joined each of them with the next. Their chief told Captain Walker he would find a mountain—which we now call Pilot Peak—toward the southwest, capped with snow, and that streams rising on either flank finally joined to form the river he sought. These savages appeared better fed, less filthy and more intelligent than those recently encountered. They were also Bannocks and were on their way to the buffalo country to lay in a stock of meat for the coming winter to eke out a food supply ordinarily consisting of rabbits and such small game. Their chief spoke of lakes into which the river he described flowed, and said that beyond them were high mountains, snow mountains, he had never crossed.

The holiday spirit had worn itself out. The prospect ahead was not encouraging; the men rode on without joking or singing. At length they

came to the mountain the Indian had spoken of. Walker and some of his party climbed it only to learn that more desert and barren country lay before them. This put a damper to their expectations and they plodded on thoughtfully. Along the stream, flowing from the mountain side, old beaver signs were discovered but it appeared to have been closely trapped. Here they met naked and disconsolate Indians. In one of their grass huts a robe made of twisted beaver skins was found for which they traded one fishhook and two awls. Leonard shyly comments: "The robe was worth from thirty to forty dollars."

They continued down stream trapping a few beaver now and then but the Indians so annoyed some of the former free trappers, by stealing their traps, that an act of vengeance was planned before leaving the locality. Captain Walker counseled caution, advised less drastic measures, but one day three of the party encountered Indians near the set traps, and firing upon them, contrary to orders, killed several. The participants in this affair tried to keep this a secret and the following day the killings were repeated. This time the news came to Captain Walker's ears. How he handled the situation was characteristic.

Captain Walker gathered his men about him and in a quiet way told them he realized that stealing of traps was an offense which bore heavily on the individual trapper since the traps had cost from twenty to twenty-five dollars, but that even this did not justify killing; that only when danger threatened, when a trapper's life was at stake, would he countenance such measures; and if this ruthlessness continued he would dismiss the offenders from his brigade.

"If there is cause to fire upon Indians in the future, it will be only to save the hunter's life, or when I give the word." Captain Walker made his intention plain and his auditors knew he meant what he said. He had spoken quietly but had looked them square in the eyes as he did so. As it turned out it was Captain Walker's own word of command that laid many savages low but a few weeks later.

The party reached the main river—then called Ogden's or Mary's river, now the Humboldt and so named by Frémont—and followed its treeless banks. Leonard speaks of the lack of willows or any other growth. "You may travel for days on the banks of this river without finding a stick larger than a walking cane. We were compelled to do without fires unless we chanced to come upon drift that had collected together on the beach." It is hardly a wonder that by common consent they dubbed the stream "Barren river."

Indian signs became more frequent as they proceeded; even a few trees made their appearance and they arrived at what we now know as Humboldt Sink, September 4, 1833, six weeks after starting out. The country was swampy and grass covered, providing fine food for the famished horses and the animals were turned out to graze. It was a little before sunset and Captain Walker with his spyglass took a survey of their surroundings.

What he saw gave him a start. Smoke from a dozen fires curled upward from the grass in all directions. Indian signs! There was no time to lose. Horses were secured; fastened together, then tied to stakes driven into the ground. The lake was immediately in their rear so that attack from that direction was impossible. The baggage was gathered in one spot and with it a rampart was built; "Substantial breastworks . . . as impenetrable to Indian arrows as were the cotton bags to the British bullets in New Orleans in 1815," says Leonard.

Before all this was completed the savages began to show themselves, issuing from their hiding places in the tall grass until the trappers guessed that between eight and nine hundred Indians were before and on either side of them. Revenge for the ruthless killings farther up the river could be the only explanation. Walker's party was outnumbered more than ten to one. The situation was critical. On came the Indians dancing and shouting, but when they approached within one hundred and fifty yards all sat down while five of their chiefs advanced toward the camp of the whites. By signs they demanded permission to enter the defences to smoke

with the strangers. Captain Walker refused this. He told them he would meet them halfway between their ranks and his own. This seemed to anger the five greatly and they returned to their fellows.

In the meanwhile, Captain Walker and his men looked to their rifles and made all ready for any emergency. It was not long in making itself evident. A great number of savages now rose and came forward making it plain to Captain Walker's men that they would come into camp, permission or no. The Captain mounted the breastworks and raised his hand. By signs he warned them that if they came nearer it would be at the peril of their lives. When they demanded what he meant he ordered a dozen of his men to join him and show the enemy their rifles. This was received with laughter and one of them noticing some ducks on the nearby lake, pointed, as much as to say, "Try your threats on them."

Two of the trappers raised their guns and fired, killing the ducks. This did not astonish the Indians nearly as much as the sound of the discharge. At the detonation all threw themselves flat on the ground. Night was coming on and the Indians withdrew, leaving the camp alert to danger. A strong guard was posted and before dawn the trappers were on their way.

It was not until after sunrise that any Indians were seen. Apparently Captain Walker and his men marched right into their midst in the grass. The surprise was mutual. The mountain men experienced a shock. Nothing came of it for the Indians ran off but later they reappeared first in small parties, then in great numbers. Many times those in advance signed for the strangers to stop so that "a smoke" could be held; savage strategy—anything to detain the white men until the entire tribe could gather.

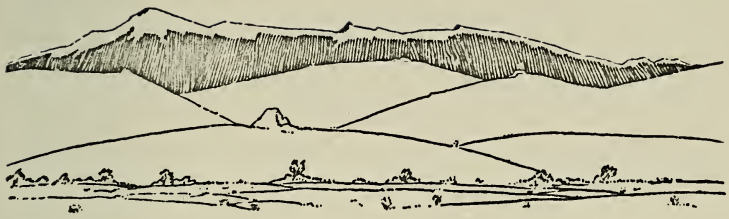
Captain Walker knew that at close quarters bows and arrows were as effective as the best of his rifles and he finally told the Indians that if they continued to bother his march, he would fire upon them. At this a hundred of them flourished their weapons and rushed forward. Up to this moment, the Captain had restrained his anger. Still cool and collected, he gave the command to fire and charge.

"Get the jump on them, that's the only way!" he shouted, and spurred forward.

During the Captain's parley with the Indians some thirty of the trappers had dismounted and exchanged their animals for a like number of the best horses belonging to the party. So mounted, they now rode forward, surrounded the strongest group of savages, killing some thirty-nine while the rest escaped into the tall grass "screaming and howling in the most elemental manner."

"The severity with which we dealt with these Indians," says Leonard, "may be revolting to the heart of the philanthropist; but the circumstances of the case altogether atone for the cruelty. It must be borne in mind that we were far removed from the hope of any succor in case we were surrounded, and that the country was swarming with hostile savages sufficiently numerous to devour us. Our object was to strike a decisive blow. This we did—even to a greater extent than we had intended."

Chapter X



HUNTING FOR A MOUNTAIN PASS

Captain Walker regarded the result of the onslaught against the Indians with deep regret. Some thirty-odd savages lay on the field of battle. The mortally wounded rent the air with dismal shrieks of pain. He called a few of his men to him and ordered them to gather up the bows and arrows of the fallen and mercifully put the dying out of their misery. Much has been said about this slaughter of what some have been pleased to call unoffending natives, but the situation of Walker and his men, far removed from any chance of help and surrounded by hundreds of menacing naked men who easily could have annihilated the company, admitted of no other course. A decision had to be made and Captain Walker with characteristic promptness made it. Other leaders before and since his time have done likewise, and Washington Irving's caustic rebuke, founded upon Capt. Bonneville's account which appears in the great American author's narrative of Bonneville's Adventures, colored, of course, with the purpose of blaming Walker for the failure of the Army officer's fur trapping venture, may be dismissed as biased. Walker acted upon his convictions and had the courage to strike a blow when it was needed. If any blame be attached to anyone, it should rather fall upon the free trappers

who instigated the Indians to reprisal by their ruthless killings when the party was making its way down the Mary's or Humboldt river.

In the distance the snow-capped Sierra could be seen from the camp on shore of what the men named Battle Lake—the Humboldt Sink. It was necessary to cross this body of water and the Walker party did so near the mouth of the river emptying into it. Rafts of tule, such as the Indians used for their fishing excursions, were constructed, and the baggage was ferried over, the animals swimming.

It was now the middle of September. Haste was made to reach the mountains which rose sheer from the plain of the Great Basin. A day's rapid march brought the company to a river flowing from the west into an alkali lake which Leonard says tasted like pearl-ash. This has been identified as Carson Sink by some. Up its stream they traveled the next day only to find that the mountain barrier seemed impassable. Walker, Leonard and Nidever rode ahead to scout the country, coming at length to steeps the horses could not climb. Here they dismounted, tying the animals to the pines, and scrambled upward.

Nidever became separated from his companions. Hearing a noise he turned. Two Indians were running toward him and away from Walker and Leonard. Alert to danger, he raised his rifle. It flashed through his mind that those approaching had done some mischief to his fellows and that they were bent on attacking him. He aimed and fired. The two savages fell, killed by the same bullet!

When Nidever saw that the others were untouched, he regretted what had been a very natural though hasty decision, and he continued to lament the result ever after. Bancroft puts a different construction on the event. He says that Nidever did the killing purposely and as a retribution for the death of his brother at the hands of Indians. The fallacy of this is patent; Nidever had many and more favorable opportunities to wreak vengeance had this been his intention.

Walker and his two companions returned from their explorations, and

moved with the entire party southward along the vast Sierran escarpment in search of a way to the west. Those unfamiliar with the topography of the region will be surprised to learn that from the plain of the Great Basin the mountain mass rises some five thousand feet in almost cliff-like form, carved but slightly by the erosion of the elements. Only here and there is this barrier pierced ever so slightly. A few streams rising in the range have cut their way to the east, and it was one of these, flowing into a large lake, that Captain Walker now encountered. Both lake and river still bear his name. Up the course of this stream the explorers toiled, reaching at length a mountain valley of some extent from which snowy peaks towered, and down whose sides rivulets cascaded. They were in the vicinity of the present day county seat of Mono County, Bridgeport, and it was up one of the more gently-sloped side valleys they now climbed.

It is almost impossible to plot their route from what Leonard has written. The trail was steep and arduous, and the prospect of hunger hurried them along, for the last of their dried buffalo meat had been consumed, and the total absence of game deprived them of means of replenishing the food supply.

One night they made camp on the mountainside in the midst of the packed snow that lay heaped on the northern slope. Another day of exhausting ascent brought them to what they believed was the summit. From here the plain to the east spread out below them like a map, stretching away into the distance without prominent features save for the rivers they had found and the lakes into which they flowed.

All the party had hoped that from the crest the descent into the valley of California would begin. In this they were disappointed. On all sides were icy peaks, snow fields, and naked rocks where only stunted junipers could maintain life. The horses were starving, and the men tried to stifle their hunger with "gin berries," as Leonard calls the fruit of the juniper. The high ridge of the Sierra which they had crossed lay to the east. Westward was a vast amphitheatre, the gathering place of the waters which

make up the Tuolumne river. Snow of fathomless depth had to be crossed and the men were divided into parties to tramp down a path over which the stumbling horses could be led. One animal was so fagged that it could not go on, and it was killed to provide meat. This needed food put courage into the party. In a small meadow surrounding a tiny lake pasture was found and the horses ate ravenously. A week passed and the free trappers began to grumble, then mutiny. They would return to the buffalo country and no persuasion would change their minds. But Captain Walker settled the matter promptly by preventing them from taking any of the horses and by hiding the ammunition.

More horses were slaughtered and guided by that uncanny topographic sense for which Walker will always remain famous, they pushed westward along the watershed dividing the Merced and Tuolumne rivers. Their sufferings were intense. The cold at night was terrible. The unbeaten path they toiled along was but one continuous series of obstacles over which they wearily stumbled. From under their feet the melting snow trickled both north and south, finally to plunge into the awful mile-deep chasms we now know as Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite. Toward the rim of the latter valley they approached with caution, the first white men to view its wonders.

Another week of struggle brought them to a definite westward descent, and to gigantic trees, which says Leonard, "would measure from 16 to 18 fathom round the trunk at the height of a man's head from the ground;" the Tuolumne grove of Sequoia Gigantea through which the Big Oak Flat road winds today toward the Yosemite. Twenty-four horses had either died or been killed, seventeen of them for food, since the mountain crossing began. Scouts sent out for game brought back a deer and one hunter returned with a basket of acorns. He had met an Indian carrying it upon his back. At sight of the white man the savage had dropped his burden and fled. The San Joaquin valley was now visible and oak trees began to dot the countryside as they approached it. Through the glass it seemed illimit-

able, and much speculation arose as to the distance they were from the shores of the Pacific.

Game now began to be plentiful. The hunters brought in grizzly bear, elk, antelope and deer, and all were surprised at the abundance of food when the day's results were gathered together. The men searched for beaver signs along the banks of the Merced and marvelled at the huge blocks of granite strewing its bed. Where they debouched into the valley they found the miserable huts, made of poles and thatched with grass, of a small band of naked Indians with whom they traded for horses which bore Spanish brand marks. These savages possessed blankets which they made their visitors understand they obtained from the Spaniards. The spirits of the men again rose. Cheerfulness took the place of the gloom through which they had toiled for three dreadful weeks. Following the river they moved northward, encountering bands of wild horses which excited their wonder. Yet with the prospect of plenty some of the men grumbled. There were no buffalo to hunt though the wide grassy plain seemed made for their habitation.

One night the camp was roused by subterranean noises. The only explanation Captain Walker could think of was that they were made by the pounding of the waves on the shores of the Pacific, an explanation which satisfied the men even better than the true cause—an earthquake.

Forty-eight hours later they were treated to another startling phenomenon. This was the night of November 12, 1833, when the heavens were brilliant with the greatest meteoric shower display that has been recorded. Captain Walker's bed-mate threw off the blankets that covered them and leaped to his feet with the exclamation: "This here's the damndest shootin' match that ever I did see."

About this time Sebastian Peralta, out on the trail of horse thieving Indians who had stolen animals from the Mission of San José, met Walker and his band. To his superior he reported that: "on the San Joaquin river we encountered a company of Frenchmen (sic) who were trapping beaver

and who were making for Monterey. From them three of the stolen horses were taken." These must have been the animals with Spanish brands Walker had obtained from the Indians on the Merced river.

Following the San Joaquin to its mouth they reached Suisun Bay and in the vicinity of today's Martinez they noted the influence of the tides. Though Walker did not realize it at the time, it was at this spot he was to pass the last ten years of his life, and to be buried there, overlooking the blue expanse of water whose actions had convinced him that the end of his long journey was near, that the ocean was not far away.

They skirted the shores of Suisun, San Pablo and San Francisco bays, reaching at length the southern extremity of the latter and then headed over the coast range to the Pacific. Somewhere in the neighborhood of Waddell creek and Año Nuevo point they camped on the ocean shore. For the first time the members of the band saw the great western ocean. Far out to sea Captain Walker descried a ship through his glass and endeavored to signal it. The excitement which ensued when they realized that the vessel headed toward them passed all bounds. A small boat was lowered, and was rowed toward the beach. Through the breakers it made its way and was skillfully landed. Walker and his men crowded eagerly forward to meet the men of the sea.

"I'm Captain Bradshaw of the *Lagoda,*" the leader of the new arrivals announced.

"I'm Captain Joe Walker from Missouri and these are my men, trappers and hunters, I have just brought to California from Green river in the Rockies," said the party's chief as they shook hands.

The master of the *Lagoda* invited the entire company on board, remarking that he had several unbroached barrels of cognac. In honor of his guests he fired a salute, and when the trappers were rowed out to the anchored vessel they found the table spread with a feast which they washed down with many a toast to their mutual success. The entertainment soon became a carouse in which the mountain men vied with the

sailors. Several of the landsmen became seasick and were taken ashore, but the jovial company on the *Lagoda* kept it up until daybreak when the captain and crew became guests in turn of the trappers and their leader.

Captain Walker learned that the *Lagoda* was from Boston and was engaged in trading and hunting sea-otter. Captain Bradshaw described the country to the newcomers, telling them that the Mission and Presidio of San Francisco lay to the northward some forty-odd miles, and that Monterey, the capital of California, was about seventy miles to the south. He cautioned Walker about appearing in Monterey with his entire band of straight-shooting mountain men and suggested that the greater part of the band be left at San Juan Mission, offering to sail into Monterey and there meet Walker and introduce him to Governor Figueroa.

Armed with directions for reaching San Juan, the Walker party bid their sea-faring friends good-bye, and started back across the mountains.

Chapter XI

SAN JUAN BAUTISTA AND MONTEREY

WITH HIS USUAL caution, Captain Walker planned his next step. Instead of marching directly to Monterey, he headed back into the Santa Cruz mountains. He had a two-fold purpose in this. One was to settle his men in some safe place, such as San Juan, as Captain Bradshaw had suggested, while he found out if the officials of California were friendly, for he had no desire to be treated like Governor Echeandia had used Jedediah Smith and his men, and the other was to provide food for the company. The second day of the journey found the hunters returning to camp with the tongues of over ninety deer, and portions of the best parts of several fat but wild cattle. The tongues were simply evidence that the deer had been killed. The following day the men would go back for the meat and hides, the latter now so necessary to replace the footgear and clothing of the whole party which their long and hard journey over the Sierra had worn to shreds.

With the party's larder replenished, Walker led them out of the hills and down into the Santa Clara valley where a group of Californians met them, and because of language difficulties, guided them to the home of John Gilroy, a Scotchman who had lived in the country since 1814 and

who with his Spanish-speaking wife resided on their San Isidro rancho, now the town of Gilroy. Gilroy received them with open arms, made them feel at home and explained that the passports they lacked and the want of which had caused all of Smith's troubles, could be arranged for at San Juan Bautista Mission whither he would accompany them on the morrow.

Early the next morning, they were on the road, a track little better than a trail, which brought them at length to the old Spanish mission where Padre José Antonio Anzas, who had the charge of the establishment, did all in his power to make the strangers welcome. The local Alcalde was seen, the passports were issued and the good padre assigned a site convenient to both wood and water for their camp. Captain Walker thanked John Gilroy heartily, and the latter, so long accustomed to voicing his thoughts in Spanish, made a struggling attempt to carry on a conversation in English.

The Captain's first care was for the safety of his camp. He immediately set his men to the task of throwing up a breastwork as a protection against Indians or the possibility of an attack from whatever the source. That done, he made ready to journey to Monterey with his clerk Leonard to meet his new-found friend Captain Bradshaw and through him become acquainted with Governor Figueroa who had only been in office since the first of the year. The thirty-five miles were soon covered and Captain Walker had the satisfaction of beholding the *Lagoda* at anchor in the bay as he rode into the tiny town of some fifty adobe buildings scattered without order over the hillside and which was dignified with the title "capital of California."

Bradshaw took the visitor in charge and before an hour they were closeted with Figueroa, the master mariner acting the role of interpreter. Matters went off famously. Figueroa was not only friendly but gracious. He granted permission for the trapping party to remain in California until the winter was over, and told their leader that they could hunt game for the support of the camp and could trade for supplies, but warned them that Indians and Indian lands were not included in the bargain.

A FANDANGO WAS HELD

Walker must have made a most favorable impression upon the Mexican governor for the latter asked his visitor to bring a colony of 50 men to California under his leadership with the purpose of settling permanently in the country. Politely as he could the captain declined the invitation, urging as an excuse the necessity of remaining in the Rocky mountain region where his interests lay.

When all the legal formalities had been arranged Walker and Leonard returned to San Juan. There the trappers had made themselves very much at home, building skin tents for shelter and providing the much needed clothing by making the same from the deer skins they had obtained in their recent hunts.

One of their number had been badly mauled by a grizzly, but aside from the usual routine of the camp this was the only event worth recording since Walker's departure. The manners and customs of the native Californians and the Indians gave the men much to wonder at. All was so different from what they had seen before. The horsemanship of the natives took their fancy. They stood aghast at the dexterity displayed with the lasso, and commented volubly upon the indolence of these same riders who scorned to walk and who even gathered firewood without dismounting. A fandango was held. The graceful señoritas keeping step to the tinkle of guitars won their applause, and as a return for this entertainment the mountain men gave an exhibition of what went for dancing in the Rockies, much to the enjoyment of the Californians.

Walker saw to it that all the gear was overhauled and that the horses and mules were fed up for the return journey. The beaver pelts they had gathered during the westward trip, he now packed on animals and sent into Monterey to be used in trade with Captain Bradshaw who had promised to supply flour, sugar and coffee in exchange.

Walker and Leonard took this opportunity to make a second visit and included in their trip an excursion into the Carmel valley where they made a careful examination of the San Carlos Mission. Leonard was much

struck with the beauty of the church and the way the padres managed their Indian pupils. As Walker and Leonard rode along, they speculated on what might become of this smiling country, where everyone seemed so lazy, if by chance the Stars and Stripes ever flew over it. Both were of the opinion that a thriving commonwealth would spring up from such fertile soil under the management of hard working Americans. A prophetic vision Walker lived to see realized.

Back in Monterey the business of buying supplies was completed and Captain Bradshaw took his visitors on board the *Lagoda* for entertainment. Governor Figueroa was an honored guest, and the day passed off pleasantly. The holiday soon came to an end, and Captain Walker and Leonard rode back to San Juan. It was now January and the start for the trip across the Sierra was scheduled for mid-February. There was much to be done, more horses and mules to be purchased. Several of Walker's men, fascinated by climate and the ease and leisure open to all in California, told their captain that they were going to remain.

Among these was Nidever who later became famous as a hunter of sea-otter and who lived to a ripe old age in the mañana land which so appealed to him. The day of departure approached; one and all regretted to leave the spot where so much comfort had been their portion. Walker rallied his companions, told them they were becoming soft, unworthy of mountain men who braved and courted danger. Camp was at last broken up and with the solemn benediction of Padre Anzas ringing in their ears the cavalcade started off early one morning bound for "The two Lares," Joe Meek's spelling of Tulares, as the San Joaquin valley was then known.

Chapter XII

WINTERING ON THE SAN JOAQUIN

It was January 13, 1834 when the Walker party pulled up stakes and abandoned their camp at San Juan Bautista. In a leisurely manner they marched eastward and across the Mount Diablo range and down into the broad plain of the San Joaquin, which Leonard calls the Sulphur river. Before their departure six of their best horses had been stolen, and when protest had been made to the local Alcalde they found that little value was placed upon horse flesh and that it was a Californian custom to help oneself to a mount whenever occasion arose. However, in this instance, there was a sequel.

Camp in the new location was made on a knoll near the river and from there the men carried on their trapping and hunting. Elk, deer and bear were plentiful and aside from one or two grizzly encounters nothing of moment happened. An old trapper who prided himself on his long rifle, calling it by the pet name of "knock-'em stiff," a weapon carrying a one ounce ball, met, while out with a companion, a pair of huge bears. As he approached one, it rose on its hind feet, but the intrepid hunter did not pull the trigger. Instead he advanced until he was able to thrust the muzzle of his gun squarely in the animal's jaws. He then fired, and, as he

explained to his campmates later, the grizzly succumbed with "a very bad cough." Encouraged by his example, his comrade treated his grizzly opponent in a like manner.

One day they descried in the distance a band of horses being driven across the plain, and later they discovered that the Mission of San Juan had been visited by horse-thieving Indians a day or two after their departure, losing as many as 300 animals. A party of Spaniards in pursuit reached the Walker camp, stayed overnight and the next day several of the hunters joined in the chase. This led into the foothills of the Sierra on the far side of the valley. A grove of trees where the marauding Indians were supposed to be hiding was surrounded, and after a sharp fusillade, the spot was rushed, but only old women and children were discovered, together with the butchered remains of the horses. A massacre followed, the Spaniards cutting off the victims' ears to show, as they explained, the padre at the mission that they had been zealous in their task, although they had not recovered the livestock.

During the time this was going on, Captain Walker made a last visit to Monterey to procure further supplies for the homeward journey, bringing back with him in addition to flour, beans, and other comestibles, 100 horses, 47 cows and a pack of some 30 dogs. While preparations were now being made for the homeward journey, a party of Spaniards, bent on securing wild horses which roamed the plains in large bands, appeared in camp. There were some forty men in the company, all well mounted, and equipped for the task. Among the horses belonging to these men, was one of the animals that had been taken from the Walker camp at San Juan. Without a word of protest it was given up.

Leonard and several of his comrades joined the horse hunters. At no great distance from camp they came to the spot where the operation of catching the feral animals was to be undertaken. There two fences, built of posts and strung with rawhide, had been constructed. There were so placed as to converge, and where they did so, a corral had been made. The

fences were of considerable length; a quarter of a mile or so long. Into their wide orifice the Spaniards drove their quarry, the horsemen finally blocking the exit by advancing in company front. Once the corral was filled, poles were thrust across the narrow opening, and the business of reducing the frantic animals to submission proceeded. Mounted vaqueros entered the enclosure, threw a horse by means of their lassos, saddled and bridled it, and when one of them was seated on the wild animal's back, the nooses were loosened, and away out of the corral and across the plain the creature dashed until exhaustion followed.

Captain Walker traded with the Spaniards for a number of these "tamed" horses and as soon as the Californians had departed, made preparations for the march. Now it was that the six who were to stay in California bid their companions farewell. The leave taking was somewhat saddening, for while all had been comrades for a matter of six months, those who were to remain were of the party of free trappers who had joined Captain Walker at Green river and had been companions for a year before that time.

The snow on the Sierra was plainly visible from the camp. Captain Walker had no relish to duplicate their terrible passage of the mountains and so he led his company southward, aiming at the pass over which Jedediah Smith had entered the San Joaquin, now known as the Tehachapi, and once across the mountains he planned to follow the old Spanish trail leading from Los Angeles to Santa Fé.

But when they reached the southern end of the great valley an Indian village was found where a tribe, said by Leonard to be composed of renegades from the Mission of Santa Barbara who had despoiled that establishment at the time of their flight, made plain to Walker that a passage through the Sierra to the eastward was possible. With Indian guides they proceeded up the river which now bears the name of Kern, and after a toilsome march of six days found themselves at the summit, having encountered but little snow, although the weather had been severely cold.

WATER!

A present of a horse apiece was given to the Indians as remuneration for their trouble and they were dismissed.

This pass today is known by Walker's name. Years later he was to make use of it on two occasions to great advantage.

The feed on the eastern side of the mountains was scanty, but the weather was springlike. The company turned to the northeast and followed up what we now call Owens valley. The highest peak of the Sierra, with its stark pinnacles of granite, towered at their left as they moved onward in search of their old trail along the escarpment rising from the barrens of the Great Basin.

Had Captain Walker been content to keep close to the Sierra a chapter of misadventure would not have been written, but he conceived the plan of cutting across the desert, feeling certain that by so doing he would shorten the journey and reach the Barren river—the Mary's or Humboldt—at a point before it debouched into the sink, which the trappers had named Battle Lake.

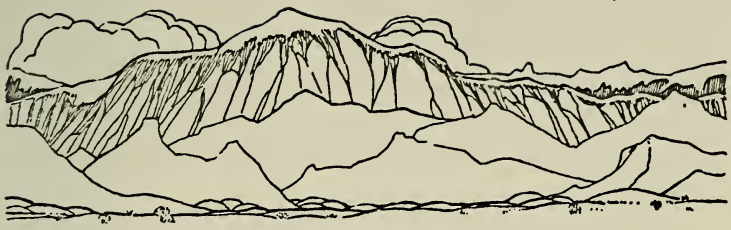
There were now in the party two Californians, deserters from one of the Mexican army posts. They had joined Walker at the time of his leaving the winter camp in the San Joaquin, and had brought with them a band of 25 horses which the captain had purchased. These men, expert with the lasso, now became of great use. Lack of water along the line of march made driving the horses a most difficult proceeding. The animals became so weak that they were nearly frantic and unmanageable. Horses died under their riders; cattle laid down from exhaustion and expired without a struggle. The plight of the party was pitiful. It was worse even than the terrible crossing of the Sierra the previous October. From murmurs, came grumbles, and finally signs of mutiny. The horses suffered from the sand, which cut their hoofs, as much as from thirst. The men's lips became purple and their tongues swollen; Captain Walker was affected like the others but he bore his pains in silence. Here was a situation demanding instant decision, if any of the company were to be saved.

Captain Walker was positive that more than half the distance to their goal had been covered, but the majority was for turning back toward the Sierra, hoping that their previous trail could be found and followed. The situation was desperate. They had food, but nothing to drink. When a cow or horse expired, there was a mad rush to assuage thirst from its blood. Night came on, and the men demanded that the captain lead them back. The party just before sundown staggered along scattered over an extent of desert a mile wide. Gathering them together for fear of losing some of them in the night, when marching was far more bearable, Walker made known that he would accede to their wishes. From the hides of the dead animals, moccasins for the sore feet of the remaining horses were hastily made, and at midnight the whole party was again in motion.

Another day of crucial suffering passed and that night the men plodded on without hope. At midnight the horses became unmanageable. They swerved toward the north and would not be governed. Finally the men, too exhausted to resist, let the animals have their way. The loose horses dashed forward in the gloom, faintly whinnying, and when Captain Walker moved forward to the spot where all had stopped he discovered that they were quenching their thirst from a beautiful stream of clear fresh water. The instinct of the brute had done what the compass and intelligence of man had not accomplished.

The next morning pasture was found and the herd was turned out to feed, and later in the day the march was resumed. Several days of rapid travel brought them to the trail they sought. The men went wild with joy. Camp was made, and since certainty had taken the place of guess, the spirits of all rose. Ahead lay a county they knew and along the way was water. A day's rest for man and beast made all face the future with assurance.

Chapter XIII



THE SECOND BATTLE AT THE LAKE

THE WINTER HAD passed and the spring had brought forth abundant grass. It was now May as the Walker party traveled happily back over their old trail. The horses and cattle had recovered from their awful experience in the Nevada desert and the men looked forward to the rendezvous, where they would meet their comrades who had accompanied Captain Bonneville on the fall and winter hunts along the tributaries of the Columbia.

A week or more after picking up their route of the previous year found Captain Walker leading the company through the country where the Pai-utes, a debased but related section of the Snake tribe, had barred their progress in September on the way to California. Again the savages appeared in numbers, greater than before, and just as menacing. Effort after effort was made to establish friendly relations with these Indians. Presents were given with the view of instituting peace; but even an offer by Captain Walker to fight their enemies fell upon deaf ears. Hundreds, armed with bows and arrows, blocked the path, refusing to listen to all overtures of a friendly nature. The same danger which the band of trappers had faced before now faced them again. Outnumbered thirty to one, it would

have been suicide to permit the Indians, even though armed with primitive weapons, to mingle with the travelers. A warning was given that serious trouble would follow their refusal to obey Captain Walker's command. He rightly feared an inundation which could well have overwhelmed his handful of men. True, the Indians would have suffered from the rifles of his trappers, but with their bows and arrows, once the white men were surrounded, deadly execution would have followed. It is doubtful if a single American could have survived.

There was only one thing to do, and Captain Walker did it.

He drew up his mounted men in battle array, leaving only such as were necessary to guard the pack and loose animals. Then warning the savages that he meant business, he ordered the charge. Into the closely ranked Pai-utes he galloped his men, trampling them down and firing right and left. The onslaught was soon over, and the Indians scattered never to gather again while the Walker party remained in the vicinity. Three of the trappers were slightly wounded, and besides a multitude of savages who suffered but still lived, fourteen of the enemy had been killed.

Captain Walker had feared the result of a conflict for his men talked wildly about what they would do if occasion arose to battle with the natives. Some had sworn not to cease from the fight until "every mother's son" in the enemy's ranks lay dead on the field of encounter. But the respect his company had for their leader caused them to obey his positive order to end the conflict, with the result that they proceeded up the Humboldt river without further delay.

Instead of following their old route by the northern shore of Great Salt Lake, they struck northward toward the Snake river when they reached the headwaters of the Humboldt. Provisions were getting low, but all knew that game in plenty could be found along the way they now marched. Moving slowly, they hunted and trapped. Beaver were found and the packs of pelts increased. The third of July, 1834 saw them on Bear river in the neighborhood of the spot Captain Bonneville had ap-

pointed for the year's rendezvous. That night camp was pitched and preparations made for an adequate celebration of Independence Day.

Feasting, drinking—Walker had carried some of Captain Bradshaw's cognac along for just such an occasion—horse racing, feats of horsemanship, at which many were now adept thanks to the tutelage of the two Californians, foot races and other feats of strength helped to fill the day, and at night song and story round the campfire made it a holiday to be remembered.

A week later Captain Walker rode into Captain Bonneville's camp.

Days of recital of the events of the past year followed. Bonneville had had but a meagre season, and what he now heard from Walker left no doubt that his great fur venture was hardly the success he had anticipated when he had engaged the financial support of Seton and his friends. The fur possibilities of the vast extent of country over which Walker had traveled had proved disappointing, and while the cost of the exploration had not been great, the pelts brought back by the company would not pay the men's wages. Bonneville could only console himself with the thought that he had been responsible for making known a hitherto untraveled country.

But if the conversations between his chief and Walker were of a somewhat morose nature, such was not the case with the men who had been to California and those of Bonneville's party. The travelers outdid themselves with their stories of the Far West, with Indian fights, with the desperate crossing of both Sierra and the desert, leaving their stay-at-home auditors numbed and speechless. Much that they told went for tall yarns, especially their meeting with the crew of the *Lagoda,* their description of the ocean. And when they described bear and bull fights that the Spaniards held, the Bonneville men knew they were being hoaxed. To cap the climax, Leonard went into detail about the finding of a swordfish, dead on the sea beach, which measured 47 feet from tip to tail. This and ox horns that had a spread of six feet they could not swallow. In a word

the returning Walker men were all heroes, and so acknowledged. As travelers into foreign parts they became ever afterward men of mark.

On the 20th of July the supply train of horses and mules with forty men under Cerré reached the rendezvous. Then came a time of wild abandon, for the whiskey flowed freely, and to it Captain Bonneville looked to help pay off the wages of the men. Sold at $1.00 a gill—$32.00 a gallon—trappers with a thirst could readily drink up a year's pay in a few days, and many did.

The furs were packed for shipment by mule train, a new rendezvous for the next summer was set, and the company broke up. Michel Sylvestre Cerré headed back to St. Louis with the year's catch. Captain Bonneville with fifty men took the direction of the headwaters of the Columbia, while Captain Walker with 55 companions set out for the upper Missouri to trade and trap. The rendezvous for 1835 was set for June on the banks of Popo Agie creek, a stream flowing out of the Wind River Mountains into the Bighorn, near the latter's junction with Wind river.

Washington Irving who got his information from Captain Bonneville while that gentleman was endeavoring to obtain reinstatement in the army after overstaying the leave granted to him by General McComb and which had expired in October, 1833, makes a scapegoat of Joe Walker. Bonneville, as previously stated, was anxious to settle on someone other than himself the blame for the financial failure of his enterprise and thus Irving unwittingly did Joe Walker a grave injustice. Irving makes it appear that Bonneville in his anger and disgust discharged Walker immediately upon his return from California. Such was not the case. Walker continued in the service of the Bonneville company for a year and possibly longer after the break-up of the rendezvous at Bear river. And in this connection, there is a point of much interest in the Irving narrative.

Suddenly and out of nowhere a new character appears, a certain Montero, and strange to relate this Montero follows the trail set for Walker for the year between July, 1834 and June, 1835.

Zenas Leonard who continued as Walker's clerk after the California expedition details the occurrences of the party, of which he was a member and of which Walker was chief, up to the late summer of 1835. If anyone should know where Walker was and what he was doing it is but natural that his clerk should. Further, it must be remembered that Leonard was not the first to put in print the story of his experiences. This he did in 1839, two years after Washington Irving's Narrative of Captain Bonneville Adventures had appeared from the publishing house of Carey, Lea and Blanchard in Philadelphia. Had he been in error, here was an opportunity to correct it. In the face of the Irving tale, on the contrary, he maintained his account as true.

Irving makes the mythical Montero do all that Leonard saw Walker do. We are confronted with a queer situation. Did Bonneville substitute the name Montero for Walker? There seems little doubt but that he did. Did Bonneville refer to Walker slurringly when talking with Irving as the man from Monterey, using the Spanish—Montereyño, or did he simply call him the hunter, translating the latter likewise into Spanish, which would then be exactly the name Irving employs—Montero? All we know is that an eye-witness is at variance with the great American writer, and that all search for a real Montero as captain in the fur trade heading a band of Bonneville's men during the year 1834-35 has been fruitless.

Whatever may have been Bonneville's purpose in besmirching Walker, in which his biographer so willingly lent himself, he has hardly succeeded, for where one person today knows the name of Bonneville, thousands regard Captain Joseph Reddeford Walker as one of the foremost of western explorers, worthy to be grouped with Jedediah Strong Smith and Ewing Young as the trilogy responsible for the march of this nation to the shores of the Pacific; the true pathfinders.

Chapter XIV

TRADING AND TRAPPING IN THE ROCKIES

To the mountain men the breaking up of the Bear river rendezvous was attended with more or less solemn ceremony. When the time of parting came the members of the different bands gathered, wished each other the best of luck and shook hands. All knew full well that never again would those present meet; death—sudden and accidental, would thin their numbers; some would drift back to the settlements; some would exchange their loyalty by taking service with another company who might or might not have the same rendezvous the coming summer. Friendship among these rough mountain men was expressed in deeds rather than words, and so with a farewell gesture once the handshaking was over, they mounted and rode away.

Captain Walker led his party of 55 in an easterly direction, camping the first night on a stream then known as Smith's Fork. Their route lay toward the main range of the Rockies. There was no lack of food, for game abounded, and hunting and trapping they moved on in leisurely fashion, nothing of note occurring until nearly three weeks had passed since leaving Bear river.

One morning they entered a grassy meadow dotted here and there with clumps of brush, the whole surrounded by forests—a beautiful spot with a

rivulet flowing through it lined with aspen. A huge grizzly bear lay sleeping in the shade unmindful of the approaching cavalcade. His presence was instantly discovered and four of the men dashed forward. The noise of their coming awoke the animal which rose and scampered into the brush, seeking escape. Three of the hunters circled the thicket to cut off his egress but one more foolhardy than the rest dismounted and ran along the buffalo path the bear had taken. Hearing the horses, the pursued beast turned in retreat. The man on foot was in imminent danger. He made for a small tree but as he tried to swing himself out of reach the bear clawed at him, tearing him so frightfully that in spite of all that Captain Walker could do to stop the bleeding, the man died the next day.

This was the first death that had visited the company during the year or more they had been together. It left all with a feeling of the uncertainty of life, hunters and trappers though they were. In mountain fashion a deep grave was dug, lined with bark and into it the dead was lowered, wrapped in his blankets. A covering of bark was laid above and then the soil was replaced. No word was said; no service was read; in silence the burial was accomplished and by common consent the company mounted and rode away, leaving another unmarked grave in the wilderness.

Now the real ascent of the mountains began. But unlike Governor Spotswood's excursion over the Blue Ridge in Virginia, this was no pleasure jaunt.

The way was rough; snow covered the ground in patches. They crossed the Continental Divide and descended into the watershed of the Yellowstone where the fall hunt was begun. Beaver and game were plentiful. Trapping all the streams on their way, they moved forward toward Wind river. The country now became more prairie-like and one day a large herd of buffalo was discovered galloping directly toward them and coming with considerable speed. At first the men paid little or no attention to this, for there was no lack of provision, but soon it became apparent that the onrushing animals were stampeding into their midst. With a rush the herd

was upon them. There was no escape. The loose horses and the packtrain mules took fright and joined in the mad rush and when the turmoil was over the party was left with only the horses upon which they were mounted. The baggage was strewn over the prairie for miles. Camp was hastily made and all were sent out to recover the animals; many of the horses were so badly crippled, gored and crushed, that three days had to be given over to getting the outfit into shape to move on again. Soon afterwards their trail brought them to Popo Agie Creek, the site decided upon by Captain Bonneville for the rendezvous in June 1835. There Captain Walker discovered an oil spring and Leonard remarks in describing it: "If this spring was in the States, I have no doubt, the chemists would make a valuable use of it." Twenty-three years later—in 1857—Col. Drake in Pennsylvania was to drill the first oil well in the United States, the beginning of one of our greatest industries, and today derricks dot the Wyoming hills over which Captain Walker led his men. To men of Walker's type we are indebted for much knowledge which later generations have developed and from which we now reap the benefits.

The increasing load of beaver pelts told of the party's success and by mid-October they succeeded in encountering the tribe of Crow Indians Captain Walker had been bent upon seeking and with whom he had been anxious to open trade.

The weather began to change; ice and snow stopped trapping operations and Walker, leaving Leonard with two men to attach themselves to the band of savages in order to bring about frendly relations and encourage them to trade, moved on toward Wind river, there to establish his winter quarters. Cabins were built and it was here early in December that Leonard found his chief when he returned from his mission, bringing the Crow tribe with him. During his absence he had been a witness to a deadly battle between the Blackfeet and the Crows, and to Captain Walker he now related a scene of cruelty almost without parallel which followed shortly after this encounter. The Blackfeet after their defeat had rushed

the Crow camp, leaving one of their number dead upon the scene. The former engagement had cost the Crows thirty of their best warriors and the Blackfeet sixty-nine. But from this last skirmish the victors returned without the loss of a man and they were jubilant. Upon the corpse of the lone brave the Crows proceeded to visit their hatred. Every member of the tribe examined the body critically. It was then taken to a tree, suspended by the neck and into it the men fired their guns while the squaws, armed with pointed sticks, pierced it gleefully. This orgy of cruelty continued until midnight when the Indians began a dance of exultation, yelling and shouting, and making the night horrid with their whoops. The next morning they began their march toward Captain Walker's camp, tired but satiated with vengeance.

These Indians brought with them a goodly supply of beaver pelts and buffalo robes. Captain Walker made them presents of gaudy cloth and some trifles and the bartering began. The Indians remained at the trappers' winter camp until their entire stock of peltries was exhausted, but, when they departed, they left behind them one of their number, a former chief, who for four years had been a great burden, for he was paralyzed on one side and speechless. The Crow chieftain told Captain Walker that he could not be bothered with the man any longer and that when the trappers moved on they could do with him as they wished. The mountain men made this Indian as comfortable as possible, assigning a cabin to him and providing him with food. Winter passed into spring and it was again time to think of the business at hand. Preparations were made to break up camp and to commence trapping. *Caches* were dug to hold the results of their trading and trapping and while these were being made a bank caved in burying all of the four men at work. Three were rescued but the fourth was so badly crushed that he died the next morning at dawn.

"We deposited in the cold earth the remains of our companion, Mr. Laront, in the most respectable manner our means would allow, after which we resumed our business of secreting our wares."

In such simple language Leonard records the second death among his comrades.

The continual presence of so many people in the vicinity of Captain Walker's winter camp had destroyed all of the game. When he had first arrived in that locality "one could stand in our encampment almost any morning and shoot down some lazy buffalo but now our hunters might scour the valley a whole day and not kill so much as a rabbit." It behooved the Captain to move on to other hunting grounds.

When all was ready for the start, Captain Walker had a task to perform for which he had little relish. The poor Crow Indian could not be carried on with the party now burdened with three injured men, who would have to be transported in litters supported between mules. The Captain entered the cabin where the sick man lay bringing with him the only food available—the carcass of a wolf. Walker explained the situation the heartless Crow tribesmen had brought the impotent ex-chieftain to, and his own inability to remedy it. The Captain asked the poor fellow if there was anything more that he could no for him. By signs, the Indian answered: "Nothing, save to fasten the door against the intrusion of wild animals" and thus he was left.

Chapter XV

BONNEVILLE LEAVES THE MOUNTAINS

THE SPRING HUNT of 1835 carried Captain Walker and his men into the headwaters of many streams. At first their progress was slow, for the invalids had to be moved at a walk, as each wrench or joggle caused excruciating pain. In time the three mended sufficiently to mount their horses. The trapping was good, and the lack of provisions no longer bothered them. Tongue, Powder and Yellowstone rivers were visited. All yielded beaver, as did the Little and Big Porcupine and Musselshell, flowing into the Missouri. Camps were made on Otter and Rose-bud creeks and many other small tributaries. A wide territory was covered during the months of April and May, and the party headed back to Popo Agie creek to meet Captain Bonneville early in June.

Here Captain Walker reported his doings since leaving Bear river and dispatched some of his men to their former winter encampment to bring to the rendezvous the furs he had *cached* there.

Leonard says that this party found no trace of the paralyzed Crow chieftain his fellow tribesmen had deserted at that spot. The closing of his cabin door by Captain Walker is the last scene of that tragedy.

Bonneville told Captain Walker that he had decided to leave the moun-

tains and return to the settlements. His three years in the fur trade had not brought forth the glowing results he had anticipated. He arranged with Walker to take over what was left of his trade goods and supplies and to carry on the business for the ensuing year. Walker, it seems, had been far more successful than any of Bonneville's leaders, himself included, and in this last attempt to retrieve the failure of his enterprise he now placed matters entirely in his lieutenant's hands.

Leonard had served Walker as clerk for the two years of their association. He, too, now determined to return to his home in Pennsylvania from which he had been absent four years and four months. Captain Walker was more than sorry to see him go, and we share his feelings for no one remained to take up Leonard's task. No one has given us an intimate picture of the happenings of Walker's life after his departure. Here and there for the next few years we must rely upon a casual reference, a note, regarding his doings and we are forced to piece these stray bits together as best we may.

The dispersal of the Bonneville company placed a damper on the Popo Agie rendezvous. The gaiety that had held sway at Green river and at Bear river was absent. The men exchanged experiences about their campfires, it is true, but there was none of the abandon that had enlivened the former occasions, and the drinking was businesslike and unattended with song and good-fellowship.

The peltries were packed in convenient bundles and good-byes were said. Captain Walker now commanded the fifty-nine men who were to remain in the mountains, Bonneville taking the rest with him. Even in defeat, the "bald-headed chief," as Bonneville continued to be called, planned for the future. He appointed a rendezvous for the summer of 1836 in the neighborhood where they were now encamped, but he failed to return to the mountains, and Walker sent back to St. Louis the results of his 1835-36 trapping, and thus closed the ill-fated business.

With the departure of the returning party, Captain Walker found him-

self free to move wherever he chose. Where he spent the coming twelve months has not been recorded, but when he had finally severed his connection with Bonneville at the close of that period, he took service with the American Fur Company as a leader, associating with men he knew well, such as Fontenelle and Dripps.

For four years he remained in the Rockies, and it was during this time that he became known to every person actively engaged in the fur trade. Jim Bridger—"Old Gabe"—and Kit Carson became his fast friends. Much that Kit added to the knowledge he had gained from association with Ewing Young, he got from Captain Joe Walker.

Walker had established a name for probity in addition to his acknowledged qualifications as leader. His word was accepted as final in any argument respecting the geography of the extensive territory over which his various expeditions had taken him, and the fact that he had led a big party successfully to California made him the authority on western travel. It was this wide-spread repute that later caused him to be entrusted with the leadership of the first wagon caravan to reach what is today the state of California.

In 1839 the fur business was becoming less and less remunerative. Beaver was no longer necessary for men's high hats. Tall headgear made of silk, acceptable to fashion, had made its appearance, cheaper than the beaver tile. This change was the death knell of the trapper and his activities in the Rockies. Soon the fur business that had lured men into every stream and valley of that vast region was no longer profitable, and the men who had been engaged in it turned to other pursuits.

Captain Walker had always been happiest when exploring new country. He, too, sensed the coming change and left the mountains. Down through the Colorado parks he journeyed to Taos and Santa Fé. Between the capital of New Mexico and the growing town of Los Angeles there had been a spasmodic interchange of goods, occasional traders making the journey over what was known as the old Spanish trail. Mules and horses

from California found a market in New Mexico and the Californians were ready buyers of such luxuries as silks, clothing and the like. It was in this trade that Walker now embarked. That he put his new plan into operation in 1840 we know, but all details are lacking. Among the Mexican archives is an advice dated at Los Angeles, February 10, 1841, from Santiago Argüello to the secretary of Governor Juan B. Alvarado. Argüello wrote in part "Joseph Reddeford Walker has presented himself with two others—Americans—who command a party of 12 Americans with passports from the United States viséd at Washington by Don J. M. Montoya. These strangers have come with the object of purchasing horses, to stay two months, and they propose to advise their government of the robbery in this department last year by the Chaguanosos . . ."

Chapter XVI

PATHFINDER MEETS PATHFINDER

WHILE CAPTAIN JOE WALKER was shuttling back and forth between the Rockies, Taos, Santa Fé and California, trading horses and merchandise, during the years 1840 to 1842 the star of another "pathfinder" was rising, one that was to shine dazzlingly, to be widely publicized, and to whose success Captain Walker, who knew the unexplored West as well as he did the palm of his right hand, was not only to lend his support but to act for a time as guide.

The new "pathfinder" was none other than John Charles Frémont, topographical engineer of the United States Army, son-in-law of the powerful Senator from Missouri, Thomas H. Benton. Frémont's first exploration had taken him into the Rockies where Captain Joe Walker and many others had preceded him by a decade or more. So to speak, this was a trial trip, to orient himself for what was to follow.

Then came the second Frémont exploration with Kit Carson to oversee the way. With a tight little outfit, a howitzer on wheels, and all the latest gadgets, Frémont moved out of St. Louis May 1, 1843, headed for the West. He had a definite mission this time; ostensibly it was to join up a

survey across the continent with the work which Commodore Wilkes had done along the Columbia from its mouth up to the Dalles.

Frémont in his report of this exploration expedition says: "Resuming our journey on the 31st (May 1843) after a delay of a day to complete our equipment and furnish ourselves with some of the comforts of civilization we encamped at Elk Grove in company with several emigrant wagons consisting of a party which was proceeding to upper California, under the direction of Mr. J. B. Childs [Chiles], of Missouri. The wagons were freighted with goods, furniture, farming utensils, containing among other things an entire set of machinery for a mill which Mr. Childs designed erecting on the waters of the Sacramento river emptying into the Bay of San Francisco."

This was the party Captain Walker was later to take under his wing, as he likewise did Frémont when that gentleman was returning from his California survey. For it seemed that Washington wanted some first hand information about the land that lay along the Pacific and after connecting up his survey with that of Wilkes at the Dalles, Frémont was to make a little visit himself to California.

Chiles had been a member of the first overland emigration of settlers to California, that of 1841, and had returned to Missouri for the purpose of taking back his family and friends to the far off Mexican province. A short time after meeting Frémont, Chiles camped at Fort Laramie. There he had the good fortune to encounter Captain Walker. It did not take much persuasion to induce that inveterate traveler to undertake the guidance of the company. He knew the route blindfolded. Through Green river valley, the Bear river country and to Fort Hall on the Snake river the wagons rolled under his leadership. In the party of 50 men, women and children were several who were to become very prominent in Californian affairs later on. Pierson B. Reading was one of the company as was also Samuel J. Hensley.

At Fort Hall, Chiles and nine or ten of the men hastened onward. Pro-

visions were getting dangerously low. They planned to reach Sutter's Fort, obtain supplies and hasten back to meet the rest of the company which Captain Walker was to guide to California by the route he had followed when returning from Monterey in 1834. Here is an example of the confidence that was placed in Captain Walker. The women and children were given into his charge, among them were two daughters of George C. Yount, the old trapper who had reached California with Wolfskill from New Mexico in 1831, coming out to meet the father they had not seen for 15 years. One was unmarried, the other was accompanied by her husband, Bartlett Vines. There was also a Miss Ayres in the party who was to marry John Sinclair soon after her arrival at Sutter's Fort, and Julius Martin's wife Elizabeth and their three children.

Captain Walker "allowed he'd get 'em safe to California by going around the point of the mountain," meaning through the pass which today bears his name. And he did, but it was no easy job.

Under date of September 26, 1843, Frémont says in his report: "We followed for several miles a plain wagon road leading up this stream until we reached a point whence it could be seen making toward a low place in the range on the southern side of the valley... We were on the trail formed by a party of wagons in company with whom we had encamped at Elk Grove... the greater portion of the camp including the wagons with the mail and other stores were now proceeding under the guidance of Mr. Joseph Walker."

Traveling to California in those early days was not a luxurious trip. Every group of the few that made the journey had much to say about the trials of the road, and all found that the provisions they were able to carry with them did not measure up to the out-of-door appetites the emigrants always developed. Captain Walker discovered that it was no different when the company was made up of men, women and children. Besides, the wagons delayed the march. Food became the great question. Captain Walker knew that once the San Joaquin valley was reached all would be

well, and he hastened along as fast as he could. From the Humboldt river —the Barren river of the 1833 journey—he headed south, crossed the Carson river and following the Walker river arrived at the lake now named for him, skirting its eastern shores. From that point he cut across country to the Owens river valley where he dug *caches* and buried all his surplus baggage, the wagons, and the mill irons Chiles had so thoughtfully provided for a site on the Sacramento. He was now in California, the first wagon train to enter the limits of the present State. The horses and mules carried the burden from this point through the Walker Pass and down into the San Joaquin where until game could be shot he killed a horse to provide the party with meat.

As they marched northward deer and antelope were found, and on Christmas day 1843 the company camped comfortably in a pleasant valley in the Coast Range, a spot which became a part of a ranch Captain Walker was to purchase later. The men who had left Fort Hall in such a hurry to bring help had not put in an appearance, but the Captain took good care of his charges and soon delivered them to their waiting relatives and friends at Sutter's Fort.

That task done, Captain Walker turned his attention to his own affairs. Three of the men who had come with him kept him company; Lewis Anderson, Thomas Cowrie and a man named Dawson. Horse trading was a good dependable business, and the Captain rode down to Los Angeles with his companions to trade for livestock for the drive back to New Mexico. In the southern town they applied for passports, spent some time gathering the mules and horses and finally started off for Santa Fé over the old Spanish trail.

From Los Angeles this old trail led through the Mohave desert in a northeasterly direction after leaving the dry bed of the river of that name at a point where its water sank into the sand. Walker and his companions had joined the annual caravan headed for Santa Fé. But as they approached the course of the Colorado river about where the boundary line of today

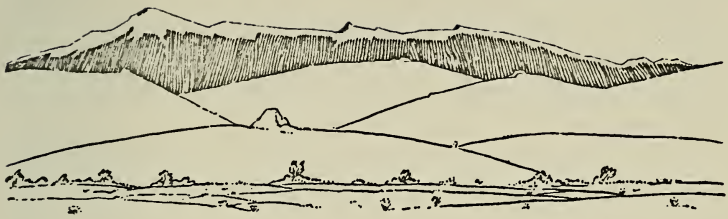
divides Nevada and California, he learned that Kit Carson and Frémont were ahead of him and that they had had trouble with the Mohave Indians. Walker was always ready to help a friend. He spurred ahead of his slower moving associates with whom he had left Los Angeles, hastening to reach the Frémont party. It was now May and by forced marches he was able to overtake those ahead in the vicinity of what the Spaniards called Las Vegas de Santa Clara—Mountain Meadow, Utah, later to be the scene in 1857 of the awful massacre of an American train at that point by a party of Mormons disguised as Indians.

For over two weeks Frémont had been dogged by Indians who surrounded his camp at night and followed him on all his marches. One of his men, Tabeau, seeking a mule that had strayed, was murdered by these savages who menaced the Frémont company at every turn. This was Frémont's situation when Captain Walker reached him. "After we left *Vegas*" the explorer wrote in his report, "we had the gratification to be joined by the famous hunter and trapper Mr. Joseph Walker who I have before mentioned and who now became our guide. He had left California with a great caravan and perceiving from signs along the trail that there was a party of whites ahead, which he judged to be mine, he detached himself from the caravan and with eight men (Americans), ran the gauntlet of the desert robbers, killing two, and getting some of his horses wounded, and succeeded in overtaking us. Nothing but his great knowledge of the country, great courage and presence of mind and good rifles, could have brought him safe over such a perilous enterprise."

Captain Walker guided the party north to Utah Lake and thence eastward over the Rockies to the Colorado parks. The old Spanish trail had been left by Frémont just before Walker joined him and it was through the most mountainous region of the Continental Divide that Walker now piloted the party toward Bent's Fort, on the upper Arkansas, which was reached July 3, 1844. Here both Walker and Kit Carson left Frémont to make his way back to the settlements, while they turned south to Taos

and Santa Fé. But before their departure Frémont had exacted a promise from both of them, that they would join him in his next exploration, an exploration which was to lead him back into California at the time of the breaking out of the Mexican war, a conflict which resulted in American occupation of that former Mexican province.

Chapter XVII



OFF TO CONQUER CALIFORNIA

WITH ALL HIS short-comings, Frémont was remarkable for his ability to fascinate those about him. His imagination dazzled. His conversation was sprightly, appealing, and to such men as Walker, Kit Carson, Fitzpatrick, rough, untutored sons of the wilderness, it opened fields of thought that held them enthralled. During the long marches of the return journey from California after Walker had joined him, California, and its possibilities, was the subject of much talk. What Walker had discussed with his clerk Leonard, when they were visiting Carmel Mission in the winter of 1833-4, now seemed more certain of accomplishment than ever. Senator Benton's dream of a continent-wide United States was becoming crystallized in the minds of his friends and associates. Naturally his son-in-law Frémont was not backward in expressing his feeling on the matter. It is no guess to hazard that by the time the caravan reached Bent's Fort in July, 1844, Walker, like the others who had fallen under the spell of Frémont's personality, was convinced that the government of the United States contemplated the possession of California.

This doubtless decided Walker, resulting in his promise to join in the forthcoming exploration Frémont planned, a journey with a purpose.

The day Frémont handed in the report of his 1843-4 wanderings to the government, March 1, 1845, the Congress by joint resolution admitted Texas into the Union. Was this just a coincidence or was there a purpose behind it? In any event, the Senate of the United States ordered 10,000 copies of Frémont's masterpiece printed for general distribution so all might read.

Again, on August 2, 1845, Frémont was at Bent's Fort. Walker was with him, and so were many others of the previous exploring party. Kit Carson arrived to take part, and one of the strangest of cavalcades ever assembled now set out to survey a province of an alien government about to come to grips with the country responsible for the dispatch of the Frémont party. The make-up of this company of sixty was extraordinary. Sixty men! But what men; mountaineers, accustomed to rely upon their rifles; as determined and knowing a band of straight-shooting frontiersmen as ever acknowledged the commands of a leader.

There was no side trip to the Columbia this time; they made straight for California under Captain Walker's expert guidance. Frémont knew when he had the right man. Over the Rockies to the south shore of Salt Lake; that was the route Walker led the party, and thence northward to the old Mary's or Ogden river which Frémont now named officially the Humboldt. It is to be regretted that he did not give it the name of Ogden, for Peter Skene Ogden had been the first white man to see the stream, and it was by the name of his wife Mary that the river was known by all early trappers. This was, of course, Walker's "Barren river."

Part way down the stream Frémont divided the command; taking a dozen men with him he set off to the southward, arriving on the eastern shores of Walker Lake November 24, 1845. Walker led the rest of the party to the Humboldt Sink, the scene of his battles of 1833 and 1834, thence to Walker Lake where he arrived three days after Frémont. Here the order of march to California was decided upon. Frémont with a small group, which included Kit Carson, moved north to the Truckee, which

he called Salmon Trout river, and thence over the Sierra to Sutter's Fort. Theodore Talbot, under Captain Walker's guidance, moved off southwestward with the balance of the command into the Owens river valley and over the Walker Pass to the San Joaquin. A rendezvous was set for both companies—The Lake Forks—which was to cause some confusion later. Walker understood this to be the present Kern river; Frémont took it to mean Kings river.

From Sutter's Fort where Frémont arrived December 10th, there followed immediately a visit to Thomas O. Larkin, the American Consul, who resided at Monterey. There Frémont met the Mexican officials, explained that he was surveying, and asked permission to winter his men in California. The purpose of leaving Talbot and Walker in the wilds of the San Joaquin is now apparent. To appear in the settlements with an armed force of 60 men would have occasioned immediate suspicion. The Castros, prefect and generalissimo, tacitly agreed that Frémont might stay during the rainy months, keeping his men in camp at a sufficient distance from the towns, and Frémont hurried back to Sutter's Fort to get in touch with the party Walker had brought through the mountains.

Here it was that the confusion of names and places for the rendezvous played a role. Frémont rode down the San Joaquin to Kings river, camped and waited, even making a search up the river when Walker did not appear. All this time Walker and Talbot were encamped on the Kern, waiting likewise.

Frémont finally returned, picked up a few mules at Sutter's Fort and marched down to San José where he settled his men on Fisher's ranch, the Laguna Seca Rancho, near the present hamlet of Coyote. From there he dispatched Kit Carson to hunt for the others. Talbot and Walker had also become restless. They moved northward to the Cosumnes river, from whence Walker set out to search. Carson and his old friend and teacher, for Walker had been drawn to the younger man and during the years had imparted to him many of the fine points of their calling, finally crossed each

other's path, with the result that the whole command was soon gathered together again at Fisher's.

And now happened an incident which took Walker back through the years to the time when he had met Sebastian Peralta in the San Joaquin looking for stolen horses in 1833. Peralta appeared at the Frémont camp. There he claimed a horse as his, showing the brand as evidence. Frémont told him he had purchased the animal and would not give it up, threatening to have the Mexican thrown out of the camp if he made more bother. Peralta complained to the Alcalde at San José who wrote to the American commander, asking him to appear before him and explain. Frémont returned a curt reply; he had no time to waste, or something equally terse, and proceeded to get his men in order for the march.

José Castro and his brother Miguel were under the impression that Frémont was to move south toward the Colorado and thence home, but when he tramped off to Los Gatos creek, thence into the Santa Cruz mountains and over to the Salinas valley, within 20 miles of Monterey, they rose in their wrath, or fear. Fremont was warned to be on his way and that at once. The answer to the Castro demand was a movement to Gavilan peak overlooking the mission and settlement of San Juan Bautista. This was familiar ground to Walker. Here on the mountain top entrenchments were thrown up, the American flag raised, and a note of defiance issued. The story of the Gavilan affair may be found at length in any history of California. Here we are only concerned with the part Walker took in it.

To Captain Walker, who knew the Mexican in California, this was the real opportunity Frémont was looking for, especially as General José Castro had mustered his entire force of some 200 men at San Juan and was blustering about what he would do to throw the Americans out of California. Down in the San Juan plaza the Frémont men from their eerie station could see the Mexican forces gathering and drilling.

Walker was reminded of what the old woman had told him years before

in New Mexico. If the small Cooper party could then have taken Santa Fé with their rifles, what could Frémont not do with his 60 hardened and straight-shooting veterans?

Why, California was a prize to be had for the taking!

Frémont had only to say the word.

Every man jack of the Americans felt that Frémont would fight. Why else was he in California?

Round the campfires the talk was of nothing but the *coup* to be made. Mountain men smiled at the Castro bravado, at the bustle and movement they could see through their glasses. What short work they would make of such an enemy! All knew that sooner or later there would be war with Mexico over Texas, and why not make another Texas out of California? Joe Walker's brother had lost his life at the Alamo with Davy Crockett. What was more fitting than that Joe himself should risk his life now for his country?

The exploring party were on their toes with expectation.

Messengers with notes came and went. It began to look as if things were coming to a head. And then in the night Frémont gave orders to leave the campfires burning and to march.

We can only imagine the chagrin and anger of the men. Walker lost faith, the faith he had built up during the days he had been so closely associated with Frémont. If this was the way a leader of the armed survey crew was going to act when he had his hand ready to close over the treasuse, Joe Walker was through.

The band moved down from their mountain top and over to the San Joaquin through the Pacheco Pass, growling. And of the grumblers Joe Walker was the most voluble. He must have been deeply stirred, for his usual demeanor was one of reticence.

Walker sought out Frémont and demanded his immediate release. He held his temper then, but in after years he was bitter.

Here in Joe Walker's own words is his summing up of the situation:

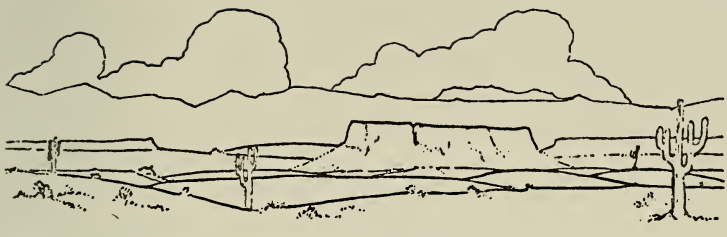
"Frémont morally and physically was the most complete coward I ever knew, and if it were not casting an unmerited reproach on the sex I would say that he was more timid than a woman.

"An explorer!

"I knew more of the unexplored region 15 years before he set foot on it than he does today."

And that was just how Joe Walker felt when he turned his back on Frémont early in March 1846, in the valley of the San Joaquin.

Chapter XVIII



BACK TO SANTA FÉ WITH HORSES

Captain Walker sensed the coming conflict. He knew that war with Mexico could not be avoided, he also knew that horses would be needed. The wild bands of animals that roamed the San Joaquin were to be had for the taking. The methods used by the native Californians in 1834 were not forgotten. With the assistance of a few men he could gather as many as he wanted.

And so when he left Frémont, after the latter's crossing of the Pacheco Pass, he sought out the men he needed and organized a successful rodeo. The old 1834 procedure was followed. Into the converging fences built of posts and rawhide the animals were driven, tamed and herded together with the domesticated horses. It was not long before he had gathered between four and five hundred head that would bring a price when delivered where they were most wanted.

Having supplied himself with the necessary provisions, the eastward march began. He followed the route of his return journey of 1834 through Walker Pass and northward along the Sierra to the Humboldt Sink. It was now spring and the grass conditions were as near perfect as they could be. With plenty of feed and the streams full, the task of herding his band was not over difficult. Moreover the captain had attached

several Californian vaqueros to his party, all expert in the handling of fractious horses.

The actual date of his departure from California we do not know, but July 17, 1846, he was in the Green river valley, for there Edwin Bryant met him. Bryant was on his way westward and after his arrival in California he served as Alcalde in San Francisco for a time. In his most interesting account of the acquisition of California by the United States, which he published in 1848 under the title of "What I Saw in California," Bryant describes his meeting with Walker at Fort Bridger:

"I was introduced today to Captain Walker, of Jackson County, Missouri, who is much celebrated for his explorations and knowledge of the North American continent, between the frontier settlements of the United States and the Pacific. Captain Walker is now on his return from the settlements of California, having been out with Captain Frémont in the capacity of guide and pilot. He is driving some four or five hundred Californian horses, which he intends to dispose of in the United States. They appear to be high-spirited animals, of medium size, handsome figures, and in good condition. It is possible that the trade in horses and even cattle, between California and the United States may, at no distant day, become of considerable importance. Captain Walker communicated to me some facts in reference to recent occurrences in California, of considerable importance."

Knowing what Walker had just been through we may heartily agree with Bryant as to his last statement.

At the time of their enounter at Green river the news of the commencement of actual hostilities on the Rio Grande had reached the Rockies. To Walker it was an assurance of the success of his project. He had only to drive his band of horses to market, as it were, and get his money. General Kearny had been put in command of what was to be known as "The Army of the West," and ordered to take Santa Fé, then to pass on to California. This was in June, and by the end of that month he was on his way

from Fort Leavenworth across the Kansas prairie with his command. On the 18th of August he entered Santa Fé, but as early as the second of the month he was in sight of Bent's Fort on the Arkansas. Word travels quickly even in the mountains, and as soon as he heard that an army was on the march to the capital of New Mexico, Captain Walker headed thither.

Once his business was finished after his animals had been disposed of, he turned back toward Missouri for the purpose of visiting his family at Independence, something he had neglected for a long, long time. This was in the spring of 1847. Here one authority states that he remained until the early part of the year 1849. If he did, then he saw the town he had helped to lay out and which he had named, crazy mad with frantic emigrants hastening to California for their share of the new-found gold. Independence in 1849 was the small end of the funnel through which poured the constantly increasing streams of gold seekers. It was the main point of departure for the West, the starting place for both the California and the Santa Fé trails.

Again Captain Walker rode toward the West with California his objective. Upon his arrival he sought out his nephew, James T. Walker, the son of his brother Samuel who had left for the West in 1847. The younger Walker was mining at Drytown in Amador County, and family tradition has it that uncle and nephew engaged in supplying the various mining camps with beef and mutton during the summer and fall of '49, giving up the business only when the extraordinary rainy weather of that year began.

But the old urge to see new places could not be downed. Too many years Captain Walker had lived from day to day going toward some goal. There was one region he had not seen, all the balance of the West from the Rockies to the Pacific, from the Columbia to the Colorado, he had wandered through save for one strip of country, a Terra Incognita to all white men. He now made up his mind to find out what that section was like that lay between the Colorado and the Gila.

February 1850 saw him with a party of eight men and the necessary mules and supplies depart from San Francisco. Down the San Joaquin he pushed to the Kern river, thence into the Sierra and over the Walker Pass. Although it was mid-winter, the pass was free from snow while the mountains on all sides were deeply covered. From Owens valley he made due east. The country about the upper reaches of the Virgin river, a confluent of the Colorado, he found "repulsive," to use his own word. There the land was convulsed and torn into cañons of abysmal depth. Into one of these he ventured and for a whole day traveled down its dry bed. A lateral cañon joined the first and into this he rode. Soon it became so narrow that he could not turn his horse. For two or three miles the rocks actually closed over his head, obscuring the sky. He found himself in an immense natural tunnel two hundred feet high and in one spot saw driftwood piled sixty feet in the air, a reminder of the torrent that must have rushed through the rocks following some cloud-burst.

The report of his discoveries filled columns of the San Francisco papers then and later, for chance had led him to the Seven Cities of Cibola Coronado had sought in 1540, and which we know today as the Zuñi and Moqui villages in northern Arizona.

The settlements of these Indians were cut off from the Spanish at Santa Fé by the raiding Navajos. To the south and west of them, the Apaches prevented approach. Until Captain Walker made his visit to them in the winter of 1850 they were almost as mythical as when Coronado had set out to make his fortune by seizing the untold wealth he had been told existed there, but in which he was mistaken.

In an article in *The San Francisco Daily Herald* of October 9, 1853 relative to the discoveries in 1850 by Walker is the following: "We believe that Capt. Joe Walker, the veteran mountaineer and trapper, is the only white man in this country that has ever visited this strange people, and from him we gathered in the course of a long conversation a most interesting account of their country and manners. The most implicit con-

fidence may be placed in all his statements. He is entirely free from that habit of romancing and exaggerating which we often find among great travelers."

This appraisal of the man is of more importance than what he discovered. It bears out what all who came in contact with Captain Joe Walker have always asserted, that he was a man of truth.

In the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley, there is a "Life and Adventures of George Nidever, a pioneer of California since 1834," an unpublished manuscript, dictated by the man himself to E. F. Murray. Nidever's word of praise of his old friend and comrade is a fitting companion-piece to the newspaperman's summing up of Captain Walker.

Of him, Nidever says, "He was one of the best leaders I have ever met —a good hunter and trapper, thoroughly versed in Indian signs and possessed a good knowledge of the mountains. He could find water quicker than any man I ever knew."

Captain Walker was now getting on in years; he was fifty-two, and yet increasing age did not seem to interfere with his traveling back and forth over his beloved West whenever the spirit moved him. He had never married, so there were no close family ties to anchor him. Whenever the call of the great open spaces came to him there was nothing to prevent his answering it in person. Of all the men who scouted the unknown places of the West he traveled most. Hardly a year passed without a journey across and back from the Rockies or Santa Fé to California.

Here is what *The San Francisco Daily Herald* published on Friday, December 19, 1851 under the heading—"Further from the South":

"From the *Los Angeles Star,* received by the Sea Bird, we extract the following items of news in addition to that furnished in yesterday's *Herald:*

"'Capt. Walker went to N. M. with the intention of procuring sheep for the California market, but finding they sustained too high a price to render the speculation profitable, he returned without them.

"'A portion of the company who went to N. M. with Capt. Walker proceeded to the Eastern States.

"'Capt. Walker reports two droves of sheep, numbering altogether 12,000 on the road to California. The sheep are owned by New Mexicans.

"'Capt. Walker had a slight skirmish with the Apaches, but saving that he had no trouble with the Indians.

"'We also learn that Gen. Sumner had encountered the *Narvajo* (sic) Indians this side Albequerque (sic). A well fought battle resulted in the total routing of the U. S. forces.

"'Capt. W. is resting at Chino. We learn that he left N. M. on the 1st of Nov. and that he was six weeks on the road.'"

From the file of the *Los Angeles Star* in the Huntington Library it was ascertained that the above quotation was taken from the issue of December 13, 1851.

"Capt. W. is resting at Chino."

It is not a very great stretch of the imagination to picture Don "Julian" Williams as his host. Where else could he have stopped save with that genial hacendado whose broad acres covered the whole countryside? What an exchange of tales those two must have made. Walker telling about his experiences with Frémont, Williams his with the native Californians at the time of the conquest, the siege of Chino and all that followed. Is it not just possible that those two sipped as they talked and that the deep red vintage which filled their glasses had been grown by Don Luis Vignes at his Aliso vineyard near the pueblo of Los Angeles?

Chapter XIX

THE LAST YEARS

IT WAS AFTER Captain Walker returned from his exploration of the Zuñi and Moqui villages that an enthusiastic San Francisco newspaper man interviewed him. Beginning his article on the Walker exploration, the writer in *The San Francisco Daily Herald* paid the former trapper and mountain man this tribute:

"Were Captain Walker a professional traveler the story of his wanderings and adventures among the mountains in strange lands in the centre of our continent, would make his fortune. For years before the Americans became masters of California—while Independence, Missouri was yet an infant city—he left the settlements for the wilds of the interior. Here he continued to trap for beaver from year to year seeking the most unfrequented spots and penetrating alone into the wilds never before trod by a white man. His was not, however, the mere pursuit of a livelihood. He was an enthusiast in his love for the mountains and the woods, and with the true spirit of the traveler often left his traps to follow the windings of some new river, or to examine the ruins of some ancient city."

It would seem that all who became acquainted with Captain Walker held

him in high esteem and no one more so than Julius Martin who, with his wife Elizabeth and their three daughters, had been members of the Chiles party which the Captain had guided to California in 1843. Martin had established himself near the San Isidro ranch of John Gilroy. And it was there as a neighbor of Martin that the Captain embarked as a ranchero in the year 1851.

For the next three years he was content to stay in California and lead the more or less prosaic life of a ranchman. But the old restlessness finally seized him and in 1854 he organized a party to explore and prospect in the region surrounding Mono Lake where the mining town of Bodie later sprung into being.

Upon his return from this excursion he acquired a cattle-ranch in Monterey county about 25 miles nearly due east of the Mission of Soledad. It was in a pleasant valley through which ran a stream and within the boundaries of this newly acquired property that the Captain had encamped with the members of the Chiles party on Christmas Day, 1843.

In a short article in the *Daily Cailfornia Chronicle* published in San Francisco April 16, 1856, the purchase of this cattle property is spoken of, the information being derived from a previous issue of the *Monterey Sentinel.* "The Captain is now old," says the writer in the *Sentinel,* "and his sight has become unfortunately affected by the hardships of his mountain campaigns but his ordinary health is good. Walker is now 60 years of age but still fond of hunting and exploring the frontier country. If the life of Walker could be written what a life of adventure, enterprise and peril it would make. From 1825 to 1855, a space of 30 years, he has tramped, trapped, hunted and explored strange and outlandish Indian countries. Thirty years of a man's life spent in traveling and danger is something to talk about."

And so for a time cattle ranching filled his days. But in 1859 the Indians around the Colorado river showed signs of restlessness. A survey was to be undertaken and it was necessary to provide the party with competent

guides. Kit Carson was called westward from New Mexico and from California Captain Joe Walker made his way to Fort Mohave to lend his aid.

In speaking of this occurrence Kit Carson said: "We were on the Colorado river near Fort Mohave having guided Col. Thompson and a company of soldiers who were on a surveying tour from Fort Tejon to Fort Yuma. I was not familiar with the country lying on the Colorado river below Fort Mohave and from this portion of the route the celebrated scout and trapper Joe Walker was to go with us and act as guide after we passed through that portion of the country with which I was acquainted. Joe was a tall, large man, six feet high and weighing over 200 pounds. We slept together in the same blanket and many a night have I laid awake listening to his stories of fights with the Indians and his hairbreadth escapes."

It was on this exploration that Captain Walker confounded the army officers with his most mystical ability of determining the lay of the land ahead. Without previously having visited the line of march to be taken, he was always able to sketch out a map of the region, locating its water, wood and pasturage possibilities with great accuracy after making a rapid survey through his glasses from some elevated situation.

Upon his return from the Colorado river survey, he left California again, this time on a prospecting tour of both Arizona and New Mexico and in 1862 in the course of his journeying, he arrived at the spot where now the town of Prescott, Arizona is located. There his party was responsible for the discovery of the Yavapai mining region. Two years later, he returned for a short visit to California. But the lure of Arizona drew him back again and there he remained until 1867.

James T. Walker, the son of his brother Samuel who had died on the way to California in 1849, had settled in the Ygnacio valley in Contra Costa county, California. It was to his nephew's home there that Captain Walker went upon his return from Arizona. He was now nearing seventy years of age and the hard life he had led for more than fifty years was beginning to tell upon him. From this time on he remained constantly at the home

of his nephew. Many sought to obtain from him the story of his exploits but no one was successful for the Captain consistently refused to talk about what he had done. He was modest to a fault regarding his accomplishments and only at very rare intervals was anyone ever able to stir him so deeply that an opinion of the old explorer would be forthcoming.

Among the few subjects upon which Captain Walker could be relied to talk was that of Frémont. The presidential campaign of 1856 had depended upon the picturesque background of Frémont's doings in the Rockies and his so-called conquest of California. Frémont had been transformed into a hero and the title of pathfinder had been bestowed upon him. The mere mention of Frémont and pathfinder were enough to bring a flash of anger to old Captain Walker's eyes. At the time of the Civil War Captain Walker remarked "They tell me Stonewall Jackson whipped him (meaning Frémont) in battle. And it was no credit to Jackson for an old squaw could whip Frémont."

After Custer's defeat and death on the Little Big Horn and just before Captain Walker's death, he was asked for his opinion about the engagement and the Indians against whom Custer fought.

"How about Sioux Indians? They are numerous and in numbers only are they very formidable for I always considered them as inferior to many other tribes. Man to man they will fight but still they are not to be feared by men who understand Indian fighting if the numbers are anything like equal. I have fought better Indians than the Sioux with odds five to one against me and the position of their own choosing and I still wear my hair.

"I do not say this to boast, but merely state it by way of illustrating the difference between Indians and white men when white men are of the right kind. Soldiers are well enough to mount guard and make a show on dress parade but are poor things when Indians are to be fought."

WHERE THE WEST WIND BLOWS

AUTUMN DAYS in California are days of browning hills and falling leaves. Into the stubble of wheat and barley fields, sheep are turned. Orchards, their fruit gathered, become stark and bare. Gnarled sycamores, sans foliage, stand forth with white and ghost-like limbs. The year grows old. Nature awaits the winter rains. Along the roads the West Wind raises puffs of dust, piling the dead leaves in windrows. From a cloudless blue sky the sun shines upon a land that has given of its bounties, and is seeking rest.

Ygnacio valley lies under the shadow of Mount Diablo. There in the home of his nephew James, Captain Joseph Reddeford Walker approached the end of his long journey. Forty-three years had passed since his eyes first saw this fruitful countryside, then vacant, uninhabited. Great changes had taken place. Farms and orchards cover the landscape. The shrill whistle of a locomotive comes from the railroad. The California he had hoped to see under the Stars and Stripes had been a part of the United States for more than a generation. It was American, as American as Tennessee, as

Missouri. Civilization had marched west to the Pacific over paths he had marked through the wilderness.

October 27, 1876 Captain Walker died, having lived seventy-seven years, ten months, fourteen days.

None who knew him failed to pay him tribute. The great work he had done was praised. Quietly he had performed his tasks. He was content to let them speak for themselves.

Hubert Howe Bancroft, the historian, appraised the man rightly:

"Captain Joe Walker was one of the bravest and most skillful of the mountain men; none was better acquainted than he with the geography or the native tribes of the Great Basin; and he was withal less boastful and pretentious than most of his class."

Cañada del hambre was the name given to the valley by the Spanish soldiery under Ygnacio Martinez. Valley of Hunger! Out after marauding Indians they had been, and reaching this spot they suffered from lack of food. Many place names in California have just such origins. Today the town of Martinez, named in honor of that old Indian fighter, nestles within its hills, but American tongues have twisted the Spanish designation from "del Hambre" to Alhambra.

And to the cemetery on the bluff overlooking both the town and the waters of Suisun Bay, the same name of Alhambra has been given. There the Walker family possessed a plot. There Barbara, the widow of Captain Walker's brother Samuel, had been buried, and there they now prepared a grave for the Captain himself. A more fitting resting place could not have been chosen. Joseph Reddeford Walker had followed the West Wind to its lair, the West Wind he had faced all the days of his life.

There this gallant knight of the Golden Horseshoe, who had won his spurs in the conquest of the continent, who had rejoiced like Governor Spotswood of Virginia in crossing mountains, lies buried. Below him the blue waters of Suisun Bay sparkle in the sun—Suisun is an Indian word meaning the West Wind.

CAPT. JOSEPH R. WALKER
Born in
Roan Co. Tenn.
Dec. 13, 1798
Emigrated to Mo. 1819
to New Mexico, 1820
Rocky Mountains, 1832
California, 1833
Camped at Yosemite
Oct. 1833
Died Oct. 27, 1876
Æ. 77 yrs. 10 ms. & 14 ds.

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San Joaquin
Kern
Tulare
Owens
Mono
Humboldt
Truckee
Carson
Walker
Mono Lake
Owens Lake
Sevier
Great Salt Lake
Great Salt Lake Desert
Utah Lake
Sevier Lake
Virgin
Colorado
Gila
Salt
Bill Williams
Mojave
Los Angeles
San Diego
Santa Ana
Santa Clara
Santa Cruz
Santa Rosa
Sacramento
Sutter's Fort
Stockton
Monterey
San Francisco
San Mateo
San Jose
Gilroy
Pacheco Pass
Los Angeles
Coast Range
Sierra Nevada
Cascade Range
Coast Range
Tehachapi Pass
Walker Pass
Mojave
Lake Tahoe
Lake Mono
Lake Owens
Lake Sevier
Lake Utah
Lake Humboldt
Lake Tulare
Lake Kern
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Lake Bill Williams
Lake Salt
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Lake Virgin
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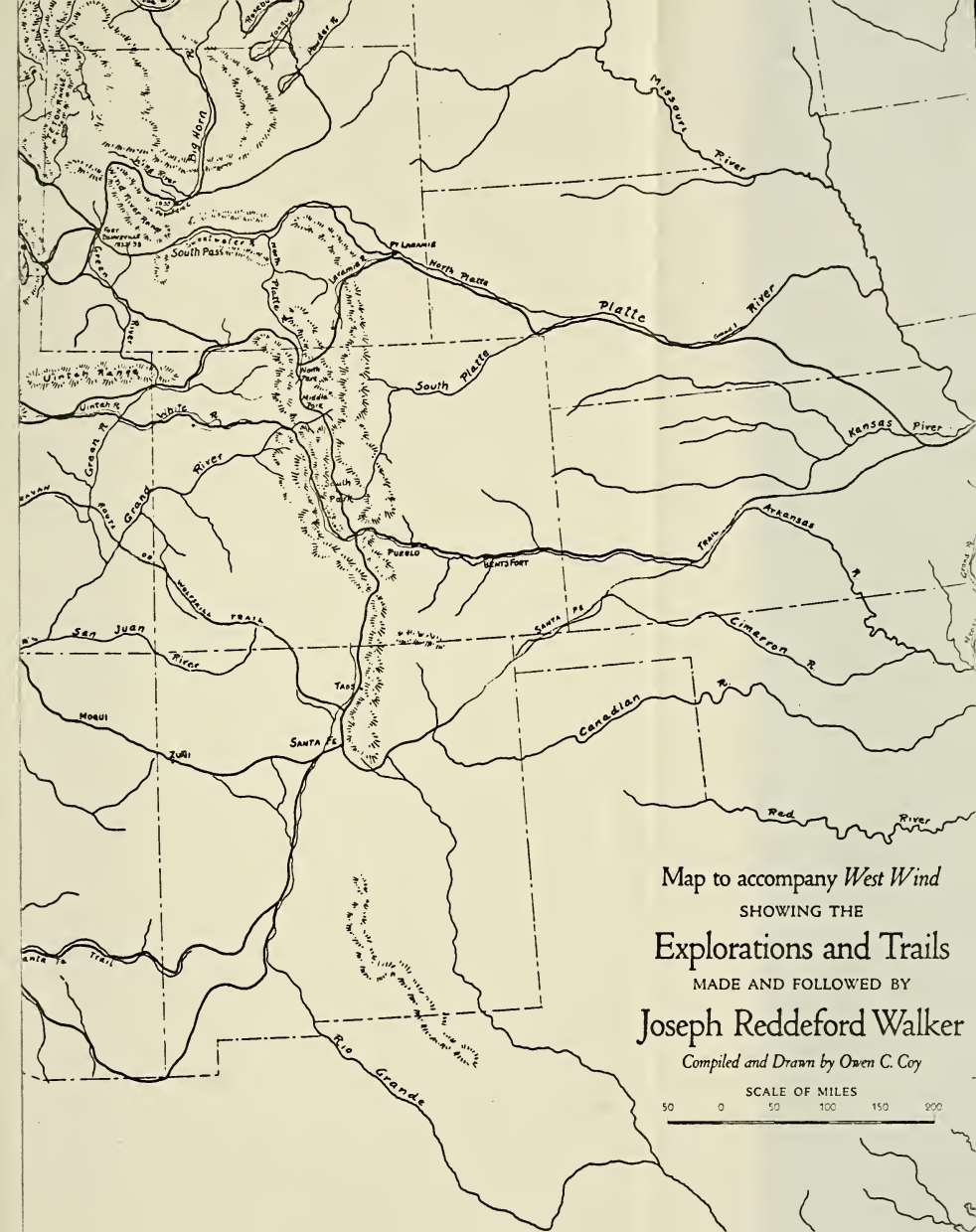
Lake Owens
Lake Tahoe


Big Horn
Missouri River
Ft Laramie
North Platte
Platte River
South Platte
Kansas River
Arkansas R
Cimarron R
Canadian R
Red River
Rio Grande
Santa Fe
Pueblo
Bentsfort
Taos
Santa Fe
Moqui
Zuni
San Juan River
Grand River
Green R
Uintah R
White R
Uintah Range
South Pass
Green River
Wolfskill Trail
Santa Fe Trail
Map to accompany *West Wind*
SHOWING THE
Explorations and Trails
MADE AND FOLLOWED BY
Joseph Reddeford Walker
Compiled and Drawn by Owen C. Coy
SCALE OF MILES
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